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THE  
Y O U N G   L O R D .

BY  
THE AUTHOR  
OF  
"THE DISCIPLINE OF LIFE," "CLARE ABBEY,"  
"EDWARD WILLOUGHBY," &c.

"It is excellent  
To have a giant's strength, but it is tyrannous  
To use it like a giant."—MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.  
VOL. II.



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# THE YOUNG LORD.

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## CHAPTER I.

“My high-blown pride at length broke under me.”

KING HENRY VIII.

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THE winter went by with its troubles. The spring and early summer came, and with them sunny weather in the outward world, and hope and tranquillity to men's minds. All things returned to their wonted course, and the strifes and discomforts of the winter seemed to be forgotten. Work was plentiful; the times busy and stirring; and there was



no leisure for any to brood over grievances, or foment discontent.

Lord Singleton was as active as ever. He had thought much during the winter ; had made many wise reflections, and was eager to bring them to bear fruit. Superficially speaking, it would have been said, that with ardour undamped by vexation, and benevolence unchecked by disappointment, he went about his philanthropic duties. But this superficial view of things would not have been quite correct. Lord Singleton was changed, and without exactly meditating on the change, many felt it. The poor felt an awe of him they never had done before. They pondered longer before they assailed him with details of small grievances. This, of course, was partly the effect of conscience. They knew their virtue had not shone out very brightly in adversity. But conscience, on such points, is not very acute in the very poor ; and they

would soon have forgotten their failures, if there had not been a change in him.

This change was from love to duty. Duty is a very strong motive ; it may become a passion ; but it is stern and strong, not genial and hearty. The effect of disappointment and failure on the young lord's mind, had been a very common one. That in which he most delighted had lost its power to please. The elation, the vanity, the pride in his certainty of commanding success, was gone—melted, like snow. He had found himself a common man ; his ways, apparently, no wiser and no better than those of his neighbours. Under the sting of mortified vanity, the passionate pleasure of benevolence came to an end. But though his pleasure was damped, not so was his activity. With an ardour equally great, he now set himself to do his duty ; and did it with a something of fierceness of spirit, like that which prompted his

stroke against the tree, when he assured Sybil his duty should be done.

This new principle was as vigorous—even more vigorous—than the old one. It left him no rest. But there was not in it the frank heartiness of other days. He often carried a weary mind in his active body. He was graver and quieter—more thoughtful in mind—less voluble in conversation.

His self-confidence, however, was the while in no whit impaired. He was positive and determined as ever. The only change here was, that his resolution was more rigid—that his self-confidence had lost something of its kindliness. His mind and character were evidently undergoing some kind of internal fermentation, and a very close observer might have been doubtful whether his disposition would not harden and become imperious, before the process was concluded.

Changes do not take place very fast. The

change in Lord Singleton was merely indicated by a few signs ; and none but one accustomed to reflect on small things, could have discovered the possible dangers beneath the surface of his character.

He went to London this year only for six weeks. His mind was restless, and he was impatient to be at home again.

During his absence the Beauchamps went to the sea-side. They returned about a week after he did. His arrival had been a surprize, and being a surprize Mr. Beauchamp chanced to comment on it, and to observe with satisfaction that his return was earlier than it had ever been before. There was not much in the remark, and it was innocently and flatteringly made, but Lord Singleton coloured, and replied with sharpness, " That he hated precedents."

Mr. Beauchamp begged his pardon, and then Lord Singleton laughed and begged his, and nothing more was said ; but Zoé observed

to Annette, that though she knew she ought not to make remarks, she must say that she thought "Lord Singleton had been very cross to papa." Annette replied—"Perhaps he was Zoé for an instant, but it is not kind to remark such things. No one can ever tell what it is that makes a person speak quickly, and, perhaps, if we knew what was in his mind we should find he had a good reason for it."

"Yes, that is true," was the little girl's reply. "I know always I have a good reason when I am cross."

Annette blushed and smiled, and made no more defence.

The intercourse of Lord Singleton at the Cottage continued, and had continued during the winter and spring with but little change, the same as usual. That little change was in his behaviour to Sybil. For the most part he remained kind and cordial, but as *unapproaching* as he had been from the beginning

of their acquaintance ; but now and then, suddenly and with *empressement*, he would ask her opinion and endeavour to draw out her sentiments on any subject that occupied him. These ebullitions of attention were again followed by weeks of—the word *unapproach-ingness* must again be used, for distance implies reserve or effort, and there was nothing of this in his manner. Two causes were likely to produce these sudden attentions. They might be impulses he could not resist—strong desires to hear her speak, or ascertain her sentiments ; or they might be politenesses, which after the trouble she had on one occasion taken for him, he thought her due. It was to this latter cause, that Sybil ascribed them, and they irritated her beyond measure.

This irritation kept alive in her mind a resentment, which otherwise for want of food might have died. The weeks went on, and no

interference of her guardian ruffled the tranquillity of her way. Certainly there was no cause for interference. As Miss Bates, in the novel of 'Emma,' observed of Frank Churchill, that "He was all the fondest mother *could* . . ." So Sybil was becoming all the most anxious guardian *could* . . . Beneath the sweet influences of domestic life, now for the first time her lot, all that was good in her expanded, all that was harsh and rugged seemed to fall away. Her manners softened, her principles strengthened, her theories of good turned to practice.

In many a home evil is rankling. In many apparently quiet homes, not only sorrow, but sin—not only discontent, but remorse—not only temper, but envy, hate and uncharitableness are hid under an outwardly smooth surface and calm brow. This is a condition of life. But it is certain that to be really happy in a quiet home, requires a good heart, and

that nature *must* be good which thrives and expands beneath its tranquil influences. The bad may conceal their evil for a time, but in concealment and quietness, the evil grows, and bursts at last; while the good, in the joys and sorrows of home life, wear off their faults and infirmities, and in the practice of unselfish love, acquire virtues which may last for ever. That Sybil's nature throve and improved, was a proof of its fundamental goodness. Full of faults, and even now cherishing a fault and a folly—nay, worse, an actual bad passion—she yet won all hearts by her ready smiles, her full and hearty sympathy, her acquiescence in the unexciting routine of her daily life, and her willing acceptance of every pleasure provided for her. Amid many mistakes in his conduct towards his ward, the young lord had certainly chosen well in the home he had appointed to receive her—well for her improvement, well for her true happiness.

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One morning, it was about a month after Lord Singleton's return from London, a number of letters lay on his breakfast table. He was in unusual haste ; there was a meeting of gentlemen at a neighbouring town, to consider the state of the miners in the mining district, and he was the chairman. The meeting was early, and there was a long ride before him. He glanced over his letters, selected one or two, that appeared to be of greater interest than the rest, and put the others aside till the evening, with a half ejaculation, "These can wait." In the evening, sleepy and tired, (wearied in mind more than in body, for his propositions had not been received as they ought to have been, and his temper had been severely tried by the dullness of some, and the impracticability of others) he took up his letters, and carelessly inspected them. One or two were bills, some prospectuses for railways, all as uninteresting as he anticipated, until he

came to the last. Over this, as he read, his brows knit, and when it was finished, he started to his feet, and ejaculated, "Fool!" in no sweet-toned voice. The next instant the bell was rung, his portmanteau ordered to be packed, and the carriage to come round without delay, to take him to the railway station.

The house was immediately in a bustle, but in a quarter of an hour, for the household partook in the activity of its lord, all was ready. Lord Singleton stepped into the carriage, and then perceived his valet mounting on the box.

"No, no, Biddulph," he shouted, "I am going alone. Drive to the railway station."

"Any orders, my lord?" Letters, &c."

"None whatever."

Biddulph stared, and the household wondered; and the wondering was not confined to the household alone. All the neighbourhood heard of the sudden disappearance of the young lord, and made shrewd and unlikely

guesses as to its cause. The inhabitants of the Cottage wondered more than any, for though accustomed to sudden movements, they were not accustomed to secret ones, and Lord Singleton had never been known to go without his valet before.

Three days and three nights passed in wonderment. Every morning, Mr. Beauchamp went up to the Park, and asked, "Any news of my lord, Biddulph?" and Biddulph, imitating his lord, replied, "None whatever."

On the third evening, about nine o'clock, Mr. Beauchamp was observing for the fiftieth time, "I hope Lord Singleton has had nothing to annoy him," and Mrs. Beauchamp, for the twentieth time, for she did not always reply to her husband's observations, had answered, "Rapid movements are not unnatural to one of Lord Singleton's disposition," when a note from the subject of their wonderings was brought in.

"MY DEAR MR. BEAUCHAMP,—

"If it is not troublesome, will you be so good as to come and speak to me for a few minutes. If you cannot to-night, I should be glad to see you the first thing in the morning,

"Yours, faithfully,

"SINGLETON."

"I hope he has had nothing to annoy him," Mr. Beauchamp observed again, while he despatched the servant for his hat and coat.

"I don't anticipate anything of importance," said Mrs. Beauchamp. "Some annoyances are to be expected in the common course of things."

Mr. Beauchamp, on arriving at the Park, found Lord Singleton, not as usual, lying at his ease in an arm-chair, but leaning out of window, looking into the moonlight. The night was fine, but fresh.

"We are glad to see you back, my dear lord," he said heartily. "We began to won-

der where you were, and what you could be doing. I hope nothing has occurred to annoy you."

"Yes, very much. I have had very great annoyance, and the worst is, it is my own fault;" and Lord Singleton knit his brows into the word "Fool" again.

"I am exceedingly sorry to hear it; but I dare say you mistake the matter on that point. Can I be of any use?—you have but to command me."

"Thanks; but there is nothing to be done, I believe. I sent for you not to consult, but to ease my mind by talking over the matter. I will tell you all about it."

Mr. Beauchamp sneezed.

"I beg your pardon," said Lord Singleton, civilly, "I was leaning out to cool my thoughts; but you and Annette are always chilly. Let us sit down;" and he closed the window, and led the way towards the fireplace. "There,"

he said, pushing him into a chair. "I had rather stand. Now guess where I have been."

"To London, of course."

"No. I have been across the sea. I have been to Dublin."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mr. Beauchamp, surprised; "and on what account? Oh! I guess. Miss Moore. No hitch, I hope, in her affairs."

"More than a hitch. She has lost—that is to say she will lose—some thousands, and all through my carelessness."

"Unintentional, I am sure," Mr. Beauchamp said, with the kind folly with which men speak when they do not quite know what to say.

"Unintentional!—why, yes—what should it be but that? But that's the very thing I speak of. What was I set over her for but to watch and care for her? I could blow my brains out," he said fiercely. .

"Now, my dear lord, just be so good as to tell me what this carelessness of yours has been. I know what a pleasure it is to abuse oneself when anything goes wrong; but we are just as unfair to ourselves as we are to other people. Let me hear. Depend upon it, you mistake."

"Just the carelessness of trusting rascals, when my knowledge of human nature should have told me all men are rogues."

"No, no! my dear lord—too severe, by far."

"This is the history. Miss Moore's fortune was placed by her uncle as a mortgage on the property of some connection of his—a Major Farrell. There it has been for many years, and there her father desired it might remain. The investment was very good, and seemed secure. But I had the power, of course, of withdrawing it, after due notice; and that is what I should have done last year; and that

I did not do it, is a folly and carelessness for which I never can forgive myself."

"But why? If all seemed secure, what fault of yours? What has happened? Is Major Farrell ruined?"

"His estate is to be sold in the Encumbered Estates Court. I got a notice the other night. It was like a thunder-bolt. I knew then how it would be; but I was off without a word, to make sure, and excite no false alarms. Ruined!—the man's estate will not clear a quarter of his debts. The man's a rascal, and so are they all rogues and rascals; the whole country, without exception."

"Now, my dear lord," Mr. Beauchamp said, soothingly, "do compose yourself. What has happened, has happened, as we know, in a hundred cases. Why do you blame yourself? I wish to understand the case as regards *yourself*."

"Why, you see, Mr. Beauchamp, I ought



to have found out that the man was a rogue—borrowing money and living beyond his income—making a show upon nothing—pretending to be respectable without a character. But I trusted him. Last year, when I heard of the state of things in Ireland, and found how many fine properties were gone to rack and ruin, I became alarmed, and considered the subject very seriously, and made enquiries into Major Farrell's life and character. But I was deceived—either purposely or from carelessness—either because men were fools or rogues. I heard a flaming character, and, like a simpleton, believed it and was satisfied. There the money remained, and I thought about it no more. A born fool would have done better—and I who had sworn to myself that I would watch over her better than a father would. I could blow my brains out."

"As far as I can see," said Mr. Beauchamp, decidedly, "I see no fault in the matter. You

acted like a father, and a most prudent one. Mischances happen to all. To her father it would have happened as to you."

"It is poor comfort to a fool," said Lord Singleton, hastily, "to know that others are fools. But I have not even that, for I hear that one person did not feel satisfied, and did withdraw a sum he had lent in like manner. Why could not I hear that before? Why is truth the hardest thing of all to find? The end of it is, that she is ruined—and I do it!"

"Not ruined, I trust."

"No. I spoke hastily. There is £7,000, or so, in the funds, the accumulation. And something will be paid now, but very little, I fear. Hers is not the first mortgage. We cannot know anything certain for six months, you know. It must, at any rate, make a great change in her prospects."

"Are you not liable as her trustee?" Mr.

Beauchamp asked, suddenly.

“No. What would it all matter if I was? You don’t suppose I should torment myself in this way for the loss to myself? No! I have tried to make out that I could with truth call myself liable, and I cannot. One can only be liable for one’s own acts, they say. It was no act of mine, and never would have been. If it had not been her father’s express wish, I should never have let the money remain out at mortgage in Ireland; though I was told, when I said so, that I was a fool for my objections. Perhaps so. That has nothing to do with the present business.”

“I cannot be sorry you are not liable at this moment,” Mr. Beauchamp said — the agent, for an instant, taking the highest place in his mind; “the rents have been badly . . .”

“Oh, hang the rents!” the young lord cried, with vehemence; “what do I care for them? Besides, they will have to pay it

whether I am liable or not. It is not that. . . .”

“ You intend, then, to replace the sum ?”

“ Of course I do, if she will let me ; I am bound in honour. But there is my difficulty. If she was like a common girl, I would do it, and make no fuss about it ; but she will not let me act as I please ; she will know all things, and is as proud as Lucifer about obligations. I could not deceive her if I would, and, after all, I would not if I could. It would be unmanly in me to shrink from confessing what I would rather die than confess. Besides, I hate concealments.”

“ You are right.”

There was a pause.

Lord Singleton appearing to have said all he had to say, Mr. Beauchamp rose.

“ Can I be of any use to you, my dear lord ?”

“ Thanks, Mr. Beauchamp, none whatever.

I am very much obliged to you for listening to me. That is all."

"Since you seem to dread the act of confessing, can I help you in that way. Can I prepare Miss Moore's mind in any degree. I am at your service."

"By no means," he replied, with vehemence. "What I have said to-night, Mr. Beauchamp, is in the strictest confidence. Thank you," he continued, more mildly, "but no; all the grace of confession is in the pain it costs. I will do it myself. Don't give a hint as to what has called me away."

"Rest assured I shall not."

"I am to hear to-morrow morning or the next, some further particulars about Major Farrell's affairs, from a trustworthy person, if there be such a one. I know there can be nothing good to hear, but it is as well to wait. As soon as I hear from him that our worst anticipations are well founded, I shall speak to

Miss Moore. I will not detain you any longer now. Thank you for coming, and good-night."

Lord Singleton accompanied Mr. Beauchamp to the door, and there remained, leaning on the balustrade of the steps, to cool his thoughts. The depressing sense of failure was upon him, where his intentions had been best, and his self-confidence highest. He felt humbled as he never had felt before, and leaning out in the quiet moonlight, every pulse within him seemed to throb with a tumult he could not still.

## CHAPTER II.

“Oh ! how the passions, insolent and strong,  
Bear our weak minds their rapid course along.”

CRABBE.

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THERE had been both anxiety and curiosity in the Cottage after Mr. Beauchamp's departure ; the anxiety was on Annette's part, the curiosity on that of Mrs. Beauchamp and Sybil. As he entered, Annette looked up wistfully, and her glance in his calm and placid face, almost dispelled her fears.—She asked nothing. But curiosity is not so easily allayed. After waiting for a few moments, in the expectation of receiving some information from her hus-

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band, Mrs. Beauchamp took up the burden of his former song, and observed, in a quiet, dry way—

“I hope nothing has occurred to annoy Lord Singleton.”

“Nothing, my love, in which we are concerned. Don’t fuss yourself; he has had some harassing business, that is all.”

“Did he return late this evening?”

“I fancy so. I did not inquire.”

“Has Lord Singleton been to London?” Sybil asked, after a moment, not allowing to herself that she was curious, but making a remark, by way of conversation.

“I believe not.” Dreading any further questions, Mr. Beauchamp with some malicious quickness added—“If you care to know his movements, my dear Miss Moore, I am sure he will tell you all you please to ask.”

“I!” she said, colouring, “indeed I do not care. I asked the question for no reason.”



“For no reason but to satisfy female curiosity,” he replied, smiling; “I am sorry I cannot satisfy it better. Annette, have *you* any question to ask. I will try if I can satisfy that?”

“Is Lord Singleton unhappy, or out of spirits?” she asked, a faint, anxious colour flitting over her face.

“Well,” he said, thoughtfully, “yes. A little out of spirits, I think. But don’t make mountains out of mole-hills. You will see him just as usual to-morrow. He is a little annoyed that is all,—and now, Miss Moore, is there time for one song. I have been cheated of my evening’s dissipation.”

They did see Lord Singleton the following day, but only for an instant. His expected letter had not arrived, and he was too much fretted for conversation. He took a long ride and only called at the Cottage, for civility’s sake, on his way homewards.

"Lord Singleton is very uneasy about something, I am sure, mamma," Annette observed to her mother after his departure. "I saw that in a moment."

"Yes," said Sybil, "so did I."

"You must not acquire the habit of watching countenances, Annette," replied her mother. "There are many sources of anxiety which it is undesirable to betray."

"I never can help it," she said. "When I see a person look troubled and anxious, it makes me uneasy too."

"In society it must constantly happen," said Mrs. Beauchamp. "We must endeavour to take no notice, unless, indeed, we can be of use."

"Yes," said Sybil, "that is the very way of society, and what a false, heartless way it is."

"No, my love, private cares must not be introduced on public notice. Good manners alone forbid it."

Lord Singleton received the following morning the confirmation of all his fears. That was to be expected. Suspicion is a thing infinite in degree ; once, excited, there is no limit to the fears felt, or the tales told. The trustworthy person of whom he had spoken to Mr. Beauchamp, gave little hope of recovering more than a quarter of Sybil's fortune—if even so much. The picture he drew of Major Farrell's affairs, plunged Lord Singleton into despair ; despair in his fears for Sybil, and despair at the idea of his own carelessness. How was it possible that he could have been so deceived ?

He went down early to the Cottage. As soon as he had determined that on that day his confession should be made, he was restless till it was done. It was not the thing, it was not the loss that so tormented him, that could be easily set right—it was the humiliation to *her*—to her over whom he had assumed such unbounded authority, and for whose welfare he had hoped so faultlessly to provide.

Sybil was not at home. She and Zoé were gone out for one of their long walks. He sat for a few minutes awaiting her return, but he could not govern his anxiety, and unwilling to show it, he shortly got up and wished them good-bye.

"I have got to go to Rotherham to day," he said, "and so I shall go now. Will you tell Miss Moore that I wish to speak to her, and shall be much obliged to her to be at home at three o'clock—you must be so good Mrs. Beauchamp as to arrange for me to see her alone. Mr. Beauchamp will tell you why, if you ask him."

Mrs. Beauchamp promised that all should be as he wished.

When Sybil came home Lord Singleton's message was given to her. She coloured deeply with surprise and annoyance, and it was in her old haughty manner that she said, "Very well."

The interval before his arrival was passed in ruffling her temper and spurring on her pride. The very time that had elapsed since interference had been attempted added to her discomposure. She remembered the last occasion, and could not but connect with it the present. She felt as if, during this long time of silence, she had been in thralldom to his will, and that now, once again, his arbitrary authority was about to break out. Her thoughts were not very clear nor defined, but people are apt to anticipate what they dread, and though she could fix on no definite object for tyranny to exert itself upon, it was for some act of tyranny that she was prepared. The vague fear was quite sufficient to disturb her mind and bring on one of her excited attacks.

Lord Singleton arrived punctual to the moment. Mrs. Beauchamp and her daughters were gone out. Mr. Beauchamp remained in

the office as *chaperon*. A servant by Lord Singleton's desire summoned Sybil to the drawing-room. She came at once, cold, calm, and stately.

She was surprised, and in some degree thrown off her assumed majesty of demeanour by the agitated manner in which he shook her hand ; but it was only for an instant, and she calmly seated herself to listen to him.

He walked about the room for some moments, as was his habit on such occasions, and then darted into his subject without preparation or circumlocution. "I have asked you to see me, Miss Moore, that I may make to you a communication of a most unpleasant kind. However I try to word it or to prepare you for it, a blow it must be."

An idea, girlish, yet not very unnatural, considering the manner in which her imagination connected this interview with the last, here took possession of her mind. She thought

of the possibility of Lowry Beauchamp's marriage, and imagined that her guardian, supposing it to be a subject of interest to her, was come in this pompous state to make the announcement. The thought merely flitted through her fancy, but even its faint flitting made her heart swell with indignation and resentment. "Pray do not hesitate to speak," she coldly said, "nothing you can say can much affect me."

"If you speak so unkindly now," he said, a flush of pain passing quickly over his face, "what will you say when my confession is made."

"I did not mean to be unkind," she replied, softened in spite of herself, "I only mean to say that I beg you to speak out and not be afraid. You know," she added, a touch of sadness giving her voice a tone he never had heard there before, "my position in this world gives me few things to care for, and fewer still to fear."

Again a sudden colour, like a sharp shoot of pain, overspread his face, and he turned away. Then, recovering himself, and speaking in a more composed and manly tone—"Meanwhile, what I have to say has yet to be said. A few days ago I received a notice which much troubled me. It was about your affairs. I went to Dublin. That was the history of my hasty departure. I went to see before I said anything. The notice was of the sale of Major Farrell's property in the Encumbered Estates Court. I fear his affairs are in a wretched bad state, and you, Miss Moore, will be the sufferer."

"Shall I lose *everything*?" she exclaimed hastily, a startled colour glowing for an instant on her cheek. "Tell me quick, for I cannot bear suspense."

"Everything!—no. Good Heavens!" he exclaimed, with vehemence. "Did you, for one moment, suppose — No, no—not that."



The accumulation of your fortune is safe in the funds, and there will be something recovered here. They spoke of the possibility of half, when I was at Dublin ; but I cannot say I expect that, and cannot hold out any false hopes. We shall not know at present. The sale cannot be for six months to come ; but I could not keep it on my conscience. There, now, my confession is made."

"You need not have been so much afraid," she said, smiling. "I hope I can bear a little loss without making a fuss about it."

"Don't speak so," he cried, "or you heap coals of fire on my head. I would rather that you were unkind, than too kind. It is all my fault. I promised to watch over your welfare, and a thousand times I have vowed to myself how thoroughly it should be done ; and this is the way I have done it. I would rather you reproached me."

"What have you done? I really don't

understand. As far as I do understand, I see no fault at all."

He explained the case to her, very fairly, neither extenuating, nor setting down aught against himself in malice. It was evident to her that it was plain, downright truth.

"Well," she said, after listening to him, "I see no fault. I shall trust you the more for not being over-inclined to suspicion. I hate suspicion and suspicious people."

"Shall you trust me in future? I do not deserve it;—but I will not ask that now; I think you hardly understand the evil as yet. Your loss makes a very great change in your position. You speak of a little loss; it is more than that."

"Is it? Then will you let me understand. I like to see everything clearly. What is my position, and what loss shall I have?"

"It makes just this change — I see it strongly myself;—that, formerly, you had

enough to be very comfortable, supposing you to choose to live by yourself, in a home of your own— supposing, . . . supposing . . .” —— He hesitated and coloured, then added.—“I beg your pardon, I only meant to say, supposing you to choose to remain unmarried—and now, you will have enough to live upon, I hope, but not to live on in real comfort. It makes a great difference.”

“Yes, I see,” she said thoughtfully, and remained pondering with her eyes on the ground. She did see it—a vision of a little paradise of a home, *her own*, which had been a day-dream to her fancy, faded away into dim distance. She resigned it, not with an outward but an inward sigh.

He watched her in a kind of agony. “Ah ! now you see and feel,” he said quickly.

“Yes, I see ; but I assure you not with any great distress,” she said, with a smile. “I am sorry, just sorry—I suppose only very

good people, better than I am, would not be just sorry.—I say this, and own it, that you may believe all I say; and now I add, that even already I am beginning to forget all about it. Pray think of it no more, for I am sure I shall not.”

“Think of it no more! You don’t really expect that. No; I have now a thing to ask, which ought not to offend you, and which, if you are inclined to do what is just and right, you will agree to at once. You must let me replace what is lost.”

“Not for the world,” she replied, quickly, and with a shade of hauteur. “I could not hear of such a thing.”

“If you were not what you are,” he continued, abruptly, “I should have done it without a word, without asking your consent, or informing you of what was lost; but I feared you would not forgive me if I did, and I thought truth and openness most fitting, in all

relations of life, and I would not be so mean as to be ashamed to confess."

"You were quite right. If I had afterwards discovered what you had done, and I should have been sure to do so, I should never have forgiven it."

"Then you would have been very unjust. It is a mere chance that I am not liable, and if I had chosen to do it, there is no one who could have told you that I was not liable, except Marchmont, or Percy; and until you come of age, you are not likely to see them. But I did not choose; I would not, even in this, deceive. Do not punish me for acting right."

"I am, on the contrary, very much obliged to you for treating me like a reasonable being. But as to the thing, I will not hear of it. Remember how I am already under obligations to you. For how much, I don't know."

"Obligation!" with contempt, "but this is

no obligation, it is simple justice. I ask it for justice."

"And for justice, I refuse," she said, very resolutely. "I would not have allowed it, if you had been to blame. As there is no blame, I should be unjust, indeed, to agree. Think of it no more."

"Then let us leave justice," he asked, with vehement earnestness, "and consent to give peace to my mind. You cannot think how bitterly I feel what has happened; do not punish me more."

"I cannot, and will not," she said, not unkindly, but with immoveable firmness. "Nothing shall induce me. The chances and mischances of life happen to all, and I am not so ungrateful as to complain, if a little mischance comes to me. I should be degraded in my own eyes, and should appear to myself to cast blame on you, if I allowed you to do it. Let us say no more on the subject; forget it, as I

shall do." She rose from her seat as she spoke, stood thoughtful for a single instant, then advanced towards him, and with a kindness and softness of manner with which she had never addressed him before, added, "This loss I shall forget, but I cannot, and shall not forget all the care and trouble you have taken for me. Do not think I am ungrateful for it." As she ceased to speak, she held out her hand, intending to terminate the interview.

But not so was it to end. "It matters not," some writer says, "whether what is dropped into a full cup, be earth or a jewel. It overflows with either." That softened manner, those kind words, were the jewel which made the young lord's struggling emotions, to overflow the feeble barriers which sought to restrain them. He took her hand, and as he held it, burst out with passionate earnestness—

"I have offered a little, but what I would offer is all—all;—all I am and have is yours to

do with as you please. Oh ! Sybil, Sybil, if you could tell the love, admiration, adoration, I feel for you."

Surprise kept her for an instant breathless and immoveable ; then from the chambers of her heart the bitterness so long rankling, the pride so long nursed and cherished, rose up like a giant and bore her self-command away. She withdrew her hand, and with flashing and disdainful eyes, exclaimed—

" This to me, Lord Singleton ! is it possible you can so presume ?"

" Yes !" he cried, " and have long presumed, I have struggled—God knows how I have struggled—but it has come forth and let it come. Oh ! Sybil, I love you, can you not return love for love ; would you, could you, my tenderness should, indeed, guard and shelter your whole life. Oh ! Sybil, be my wife ?"

Unshaken by his voice and words she was



not, but it was as water fans the flame. The thoughts of his unutterable presumption, swept every gentler emotion before it, and proudly and scornfully she said—

“Never, I would rather die.”

“Why this scorn!” he exclaimed, his own temper flashing up, “you may not love me, in my sane mind I hardly hoped you did, but what have I done to be so hated and scorned? I have served you, and would serve you even with my life, if it were necessary. What have I done that you should speak to me thus?”

“What you have done?” she cried, passionately; “you have done what cannot be forgiven. You have wounded my feelings, and insulted my orphan state. After what passed once between us, how could you dare to think of me, as it seems you have done?”

“Insulted and wounded your feelings,” he repeated in a voice of mingled pain, resentment, and tenderness. “Is that what you

accuse me of? If that is what you think of me, no wonder then you scorn me as you do. Insulted and wounded *you*, whom I was cherishing in my heart of hearts! It is enough, you need say no more. Do not fear;— you have heard the last of this. Forgive me. I shall not again even in thought offend.”

He turned away and stood at the window with his back towards her, endeavouring to subdue the tumult of his thoughts.

The sharp conflict, the keen encounter of their wits was at an end, and a dead silence followed. Sybil could not break it. Some consciousness she had of the unwarrantable and unwomanly nature of her behaviour, but there is a certain state of mind to which penitence is impossible; the very consciousness of misdoing adds to the tumult within. Her lips were quivering, her heart trembling with excitement; pride was still too fierce and high to permit her to make one step in advance.

The pause and silence was long; Lord Singleton then broke it by coming towards her and saying in a grave, business-like manner—

“Since you refuse to let me act as I wish, I must obey. Any farther arrangements must remain for future consideration. I need not detain you now.”

The effort to speak was so great that Sybil almost burst into tears. Fearful lest he should mistake the nature of her emotion, she collected herself, however, and coldly said—or the measured terms sounded cold after the excitement before—“All arrangements I trust to you. I beg you to think no more of what has happened. I am perfectly convinced it has been from no fault on your part.”

He endeavoured to say “thank you,” to the words which however cold were, and were probably meant to be, kind; but thanks would not come. After struggling for an instant he gave it up, and merely said, “Good morning.”

“Good morning,” she replied. He seized his hat and hurried away.

He hurried along too full of inward torment to think or know what he felt. Bitter burning tears forced their way from his eyes, and rolled down his cheeks, and as he felt them, in shame and passion he stamped his feet along the ground, and swung his stick fiercely against the trees.

The principle of self-esteem in Lord Singleton was strong ; anything of failure was very bitter ; the torture of his despised love was at this moment the first of the pangs that assailed him. There were worse regrets to come after, but at this moment it was under the sense of rejection that his sensitive spirit was suffering and quailing.

There are many kinds of vanity ; some lean towards pride, some towards conceit. Conceit is not very vulnerable ; it really does esteem itself above all things, and this esteem bears it

serenely through many troubles ; but there is the vanity of a proud and sensitive spirit, which is a better thing, and one easily wounded. It loves too dearly the voice of praise, and this makes it desirous to shine ; but in itself it is tender and distrustful, and when the voice of praise, when success and appreciation are withdrawn, it sinks in ready humility. In Lord Singleton this vanity had been fed with intoxicating draughts for many days, but it had not been fed into conceit. When the veil was withdrawn, his eyes had no film of conceit to hide the truth from him. He fell more deeply before his own gaze than he could before others.

He arrived at his own door in this state of humiliation and torment, desirous only to conceal himself from the light of day and the gaze of men ; but at his door he was met by a servant, who said two gentlemen were awaiting him on important business, and had been so

for half an hour. He was forced to go to them, and for an hour to listen to prolix arguments, not one of which penetrated the region of his brain.

As the gentlemen rode away they indulged in some comments on the young lord's behaviour.

"Lord Singleton was less of a despot to-day," said one, a middle-aged, business-looking man, in a heavy, jesting tone.

"Yes," replied the other, who was younger, "People say you must not beard the lion in his den. I think the den is the place to catch the lion in."

"I have great respect for Lord Singleton," observed the first speaker. "His character has great weight with me, and his arguments are sound and good. I am always sorry when circumstances compel me to differ from him."

"And I am always glad," said the young man, "I like Lord Singleton for his rare dis

interestedness, but I like my own way nevertheless, and if an angel from heaven attempted to drive me in his direction, without a proper commission to do so, I would not move. I do not choose to be talked down by any man."

"We have been unexpectedly successful to-day. We can now act as we desire."

"Yes, now we can job as much as we please." There was an arch malicious look in the younger speaker as he said this; but his middle-aged companion did not, or did not choose, to notice it.

"Did you observe Lord Singleton's eyes to-day," he inquired.

"Yes. If he were a woman I should have said he had been crying. As he is a man, I suppose he has taken cold."

"If I were a friend of Lord Singleton's, I should feel anxious about his eyes. Their prominence makes them very liable to disease.

I should certainly hear with little surprise that he was going blind."

"Blind! what an idea. Lord Singleton blind! impossible."

"Very possible, I imagine. I was talking on the subject to a medical friend, some weeks ago, and he entirely concurred with my opinion. Some years hence, I should certainly hear without surprise of such a result."

"Then let us go back and give him his way. I shall never have the heart to oppose him again," cried the younger man, with impetuosity.

His companion only smiled a placid, business-like smile, and the conversation fell into a discussion on deafness, blindness, dumbness, and other afflictions of the human frame.

The visit had calmed and sobered Lord Singleton's mind, and when left to himself, his thoughts recurred to all that had previously passed, as morning thoughts recur to the



feverish dreams of night; and sad and humbling was the sight presented to his eyes. If the pangs of despised love were almost forgotten in his present survey, it was because the pangs of self-reproach are keener far than any that can outwardly be inflicted.

It was true what he said to Sybil, that he had struggled with his love. For months he had struggled, and successfully, to conceal it. By no means intending to conquer it for ever, resolute only to conceal it for a time, and this, for motives, obvious to every eye. So long as he was her guardian, so long as the paternal authority he had assumed was to be exercised, so long it was utterly inappropriate, and without the bounds of propriety, that he should be a lover. A child could see this; none could see or feel it stronger than the young lord himself had done, and yet, almost without temptation, almost without hope, utterly without encouragement, he had done this thing.

He, whose bounden duty it was, to guard her from insult, had, in his person of guardian, insulted her with an unwelcome, uninvited declaration of love. He had raised a barrier between them, had cut himself off from the right to advise, to approach, to influence her ; her own words, "wounded her feelings, and insulted her orphan state," rang in his ears, stabbed like daggers, and excited him almost to madness.

All that long, lonely evening, these were the miserable thoughts in which he indulged. His brain was fevered and excited, and though, even sanely considered, there was plenty to condemn, he took an exaggerated view of his conduct, and condemned, as the remorseful love to condemn themselves. It was a miserable evening ; so miserable was he with his thoughts, that he rushed out at last to escape from them. The night was stormy ; the sky was black with clouds, and the lightning vivid as day.

He heeded it not, but roamed about in his excitement, in wind, and wet, and thunder, until drenched to the skin, he was driven home to take refuge on his restless bed.

## CHAPTER III.

‘Gynecia . . a woman of great wit, and in truth of more princely virtues than her husband, but of so working a mind and vehement spirits, as a man may say, it was happy she took a good course, for otherwise it would have been terrible.’

FROM THE ARCADIA.

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VIOLENT excitement, in its consequences, differently affects different people.

“The seas are quiet when the winds are o’er—  
So calm are we when passions are no more.”

So it is with some. The excitement has been an effervescence of nature, and when it sinks down a dead flat and exhaustion follows. The sobered eyes look sadly on their aberration

from moral strength and control, and, in humiliation and depression of spirit, recover, if they desire it, that strength which they have lost.

With others the excitement is less a fit than a fever. It tosses and disorders the mind, and oversets the equilibrium of the will and affections; and the disordered mind cannot recover itself. It may suppose itself to be calmed and restored, but only because the very eyes themselves are dimmed by the force of the fever.

Lord Singleton's excitement was of the first kind. He rose the following morning himself. An hour or two of sleep had composed his bodily ailments, his throbbing pulses and aching head; and though he rose sad and sorrowful, humbled and depressed, he arose himself.

With Sybil it was otherwise. Her excitement did not go down with the tide; the

waves of her mind were stained with passion still. All the night long she tossed from side to side—now assailed by regret and self-reproach—now her very pulses throbbing with triumph—now feeling shame and grief in the remembrance of the wound she must have given by her ungoverned words and accusations—words that never could be unsaid—now excusing herself, and more than excusing herself, justifying her words, by the remembrance of his unspeakable presumption — That he should dare, after all that had passed—after all the humiliation and mortification he had caused her—to love her—nay, dare in plain words to ask her to be his wife! The more she dwelt on this theme, the more excited she became; the more she lost sight of self-reproach, the more she abandoned herself to the old bad feeling she had so long cherished within.

She rose up *not* herself; very calm—so, at

least, she imagined—but, in fact, restless as ever. One determination only was in her mind—she must be gone. To meet him day by day seemed, to her excited spirit, an absolute impossibility. The shame, the embarrassment, the distress, pressed forcibly upon her; and, with her usual impulsive thoughtlessness, she resolved to depart. Had she suffered herself to consider, her generous nature must have owned that there was something ungenerous in thus taking advantage of her guardian's humiliation; but the preceptor of Sybil's early years had been self-will; self-will had been her lord and governor, but little counteracted by the mild remonstrances of a mild governess; and self-will is a blind, hard, and unruly master. Improved she undoubtedly was; but improvement is but a slow process in this world. Subdued giants are for ever springing up, vigorous as in youth.

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It is not in novels only that opportunities come to the mind that is awaiting them; they are but the chances of life which arise to tempt and try us all.

Before Sybil left her room, the following letter was brought to her.

“ Berkeley Priory,

“ August 1.

“ MY DEAREST SYBIL,

“ I always was a vain woman ; and vanity now makes me take the pen from Honoria’s hand, in the perfect confidence that my powers will persuade, when hers, perhaps, might fail. In fact, I do not persuade, I command ; and, as you know, I am not accustomed to be denied.

“ Do you remember an engagement that was made when last you visited us that, if ever we made a tour in Scotland, you would benignly condescend to grace our party ? The long-talked-of tour is about to be made, and I



claim your promise. We set off in a fortnight's time, and we already count the days until we have you with us. Let no possible engagement, my dearest Sybil, be allowed, for one moment, to compete with ours; we are old friends, and new ones should not be put in comparison with us.

“Our tour is to be made in a fashion of our own. We go in a coach-and-four, as often as we can, avoiding long journeys and railways; the fourth place in which vehicle is at the service of your precious self. Mr. Marchmont's, Sir Hugh Forest's, and Colonel Mackenzie's, are among our appointed resting-places; all three gentlemen, as you must well remember, your devoted slaves, and all three at this very moment joining with me in my request for your company. I mention these circumstances more for your guardian's satisfaction than your own. As I recollect that you are not to come into possession of your fortune till you

are of age, I guess a scrupulous guardian might object to expensive journeys ; but, in this case, you perceive, and he will perceive, that little expense *can* be incurred ; therefore, I hope his mind will be easy on that point. So much on a mercenary matter, a very necessary consideration in this sublunary world.

“ I heard from a certain person in London, that time had not yet robbed you of your magical charms ; I rather guess that certain person had not escaped some undesirable effects of their potency, but he did not say so. He is gone abroad for the autumn ; therefore, I cannot promise you any opportunity of pursuing your triumphs in that quarter. Seriously, dear Sybil, Mr. Beauchamp spoke so forcibly of your grace and beauty, that I can hardly suppose he came away fancy free ; but I wish you better things than even the accomplished and fashionable Mr. Beauchamp. Forgive me for my freedom of speech.

You know my way is not among the scrupulous ones.

“My old maid Perkins, whom you may remember, has been home for a holiday, and leaves London, on her way back to us, on the 8th. A new servant comes with her, and, if you can be in London on that day, it strikes me that this will be the best escort you can have. I send you her direction, and she will come to you whenever you arrive. Now, do, my dearest Sybil, give us the great pleasure of having you with us once more. Honoria’s love and more messages than I can deliver. Mr. Berkeley is in London, or he would join me in my entreaties. *Remember, we take no denial.*

“Your affectionate friend,

“SELINA BERKELEY.”

The kindness Sybil had received from Mrs. Berkeley—a kindness deeply felt in her lonely lot, though it had not blinded her eyes in

judging of that lady's character, had certainly warped them; nor did she condemn in *her* things from which her 'niceness of nature' would otherwise have revolted. This was not a great fault—for gratitude is a powerful principle in good hearts.

Nevertheless, the tone of the present letter might and should have warned her not to rush blindly into such society again—it might have told her how distasteful such a course would be to Lord Singleton; it should have taught her that it would be distasteful to herself. All this it should and would have done, had she considered; but consideration was far from her. She hailed the unexpected deliverance from an uncomfortable position, and, without taking counsel of any one, wrote, signed, and sealed her acceptance of the invitation.

Lest, however, her determination should be supposed to follow immediately on her interview with Lord Singleton, she postponed the

announcement of her intention till the following day.

Sybil's thoughts had all been wilful, and for herself. Lord Singleton's were all for her.

Feeling at once that her position, if conjectures or curiosity regarding them were excited, must be an awkward and unpleasant one, he set himself with determination to undo what he had done. With sober calmness he went about his daily business, occupying himself with his affairs great and small; and, the farther to effect this purpose, he determined not only not to avoid the Cottage, but to visit Mr. Beauchamp in his office, as was occasionally his habit, in the morning.

He went to him, therefore, and invited him to accompany him to Barnsley, to determine on a site for some new cottages. He was not quite prepared for the proposal that followed.

"I have a message to give to my wife; shall you have any objection to look into the drawing-room for a moment.?"

Lord Singleton's heart beat suddenly and violently ; but, after an instant's struggle, he acquiesced. How better, he quickly asked himself, could he allay Sybil's fears—convince her of his self-control—show that he might be trusted—and lead her back to their former friendly footing? For such advantages he summoned up his courage, and followed Mr. Beauchamp into the room.

All there was calm and unconscious. All were at their usual occupations, with the exception of Sybil ; she, with a book in her hand, was gazing idly out upon the lawn, imagining she read, but, in truth, only revolving again and again the same questions that had occupied her through the night.

Lord Singleton had never known what it was to feel abashed and awkward till that moment. But that moment contained in itself the experience of years. Shame and humiliation almost drove him backward, when

he set his foot in the doorway, and met her surprised and startled glance. But, with an effort, he recalled his senses, and composedly performed the duty he came to do.

After speaking to Mrs. Beauchamp and Annette, he went straight across the room to Sybil, and held out his hand. She gave it, but was herself too much astonished and bewildered to look up. He pardoned that—nay, was relieved by it. He wished to attempt no apology, not even by a look; he wished only to show her that she need not distrust him, and unconsciousness best secured that object. Having paid his usual quiet greeting, he turned away, and rejoined Mrs. Beauchamp.

Annette's quick eyes saw he was awkward, and guessed, though wrongly, at the cause. Anxious to relieve him, she began to speak of the last night's storm. Had he heard it?

"Yes, indeed," he replied, "who could not have heard it?"

"Mamma did not," Annette said.

"You must have a quiet conscience, Mrs. Beauchamp, to sleep so sound," he smilingly observed.

"I hope your wakefulness was no proof of the contrary, Lord Singleton," she replied, in the same tone.

The most matter-of-fact people sometimes speak thoughtlessly. She saw in a moment that she had given pain, for he coloured, glanced hastily at Sybil, and muttered, "Not much to be said on that point."

The out-of-place observation produced one of those dead silences which every one feels it impossible to break.

It was, however, broken very shortly by Mr. Beauchamp, who had been writing a few lines, and now giving them to his wife, called to Lord Singleton, that he was ready.

Most thankfully he followed him from the



room, and sighed a sigh of relief as he strided away.

Annette saw him go, with anxious eyes; and after sitting for some time in thought, she laid down her pen, and joined Sybil at the window.

"Lord Singleton feels your loss more than you do, Sybil," she observed, as she stood beside her.

"I think he does," she replied, without looking round. "I am sure I wish he would not think about it."

She had been touched and affected by Lord Singleton's behaviour, in a way she did not like. She read its meaning plainly, and it seemed to reproach her for what she was about to do. But the more she felt this, the less was her pride disposed to yield to it.

"I suppose it is natural he should be distressed," Annette began again, "because, as he thinks at least, it is his fault."

"His fault!" Sybil exclaimed, eagerly, her eagerness in his defence a relief to, and compromise with, her conscience. "How can it be his fault. To discover secrets is not a gift given even to the wisest. Lord Singleton did, I am certain, all he could for me, and though he may perhaps think me ungrateful, I am not so. I hope only that others who may be affected by this man's ruin, will feel it as little as I do."

"Did you speak as kindly to Lord Singleton as you do to me?" Annette asked, with earnest, enquiring eyes.

"You know, Annette," Sybil said, blushing deeply, "that Lord Singleton and I do not always agree. If he assumes too much, I may forget myself, and say more than I ought. I believe I did yesterday. I wish I had not, and am very sorry I did."

"May I tell him you say so?"

"Yes, certainly, I shall be glad if you do."

and relieved by what she had said, she took up her book, and began to read in good earnest.

Annette hastened to her mother, who had left the room before this conversation, to ask her leave to follow Lord Singleton. The usual protest was entered against an act, bespeaking so much of intimacy, but the usual acquiescence, when the case was explained, was given. She saw Lord Singleton was ill at ease, she was too kind not to wish to relieve him. Thus were her constant resolutions regarding Annette, put to flight.

Annette took her little chaperon, Zoé, and pursued her father and Lord Singleton to Barnsley. She soon found the objects of her search. Her father was busily engaged with a workman and a measuring line, and was stamping up and down a piece of ground, counting his steps. Lord Singleton was standing listlessly by; usually he would have been the

eagerest of the eager, trusting to no one but himself, but he was too sad to care this day.

Annette suffered Zoé to run to her father, and went and stood by Lord Singleton. He smiled at her, but did not speak, and remained as if intently curious as to the result of the measurements.

"I am afraid you are unhappy," she said at last. "I am so sorry."

"Thank you very much, my dear Annette," he said kindly. "I am not particularly happy, I own, but that's no matter."

"Why unhappy? I have just been talking to Sybil, and you cannot think how nicely and kindly she speaks."

"About what?" he said quickly, colouring as he spoke.

"About this loss. She told me, and so did mamma. Did you mind?"

"Oh! not in the least. I only wished to let her be the first to hear. Yes I know she

does,—she speaks very kindly, but that is no comfort to me, that is, not much.”

“Did she speak kindly,” Annette asked, “I was afraid, from what she said, that she had not.”

“What did she say?”

“She almost said that.—She said she knew she had forgotten herself, and had said things she ought not, and she seems *very* sorry—and she said she should be glad if I told you so.”

“I am very much obliged to her and you,” Lord Singleton said after a moment’s thought. “Did you come all this way to tell me. You are very kind my dear Annette.—Thank you very much, and now let us speak of it no more. Come and look at this plan. How do you like it for the almshouses? We shall set to work on them as soon as ever the church is finished.”

Annette’s mind was relieved by having done what she could, but she was sorry to see, as

she watched his countenance, that she had done but little. She was perplexed, and returned home anxious in mind.

The following morning Sybil went to Mr. Beauchamp as he read the newspaper after breakfast, and made known to him her intentions.

She had followed the usual, and indeed the only course, for those who have determined on a line of conduct, and yet are dissatisfied with it;—she had ceased to think. She had said it was settled and had revolved the question no more.

When, in detailing her plan, she came to speak of her regret at leaving her present home, to Mr. Beauchamp's surprise, and to her own no less so, her voice suddenly broke down and she burst into tears.

"My dear child!" he exclaimed, aghast, "what is the meaning of this?"

She dashed away her tears with a half-

laugh, and said, "I don't know, indeed. I knew I was sorry to go, but I did not know I was so very sorry."

"But you are only speaking of a visit my love, are you?"

"This world is uncertain," she replied gravely, "When once a change comes one does not know what will happen next."

"Very true, but we will hope not in this case. Are you tired of us, my dear Miss Moore? Would you willingly leave us?"

"No, no, indeed," she said, warmly and a second time with tears. "Don't think I am ungrateful enough as to wish to go."

"I do not. Now my love let us talk over your plan. Does Lord Singleton know of it?"

"No, not yet," she said, colouring.

"But he must—you must have his leave. Now my dear child, do not be angry with me. He is your guardian, and nothing can make him not so."

"In all just and right things I will allow his interference," she said calmly, and without indignation, "but in such a thing as a visit I will judge for myself. I wrote yesterday to accept Mrs. Berkeley's invitation. Will you be so kind as to tell him so?"

"I will. Is there anything else to be said?"

"You shall see what she says about money," Sybil said with some hesitation. "I know I ought not to be extravagant, but I think there will be very little extravagance here. If there is, I will be more careful afterwards. Will you repeat what I say?" She drew Mrs. Berkeley's letter from her pocket and gave it to him, remarking, as she slightly blushed, "It is a foolish letter, but she is a kind woman."

Mr. Beauchamp read it with a smile on his face, and two or three shakes of his head. When he gave it back, he observed—"Kind



and though,ful, my love, certainly, but foolish, as you say—very foolish. Is she a fitting and proper friend for you? Does Lord Singleton know of your acquaintance with her, and approve of it?”

“I cannot tell,” she said quickly. “She is an old friend, and has been very kind to me. Some people are so circumstanced that they can choose their friends; but those who are orphans and alone in the world, as I am, cannot afford to shake off their friends for every word of folly they speak.”

“My love, you speak truly. I will say no more. You are wise enough, I believe, to guide and direct yourself. I will do your commission to Lord Singleton. I am just going up to the Park. I hope it will not annoy him; he has had annoyance enough of late.”

“I hope not,” she replied, with a slight swell of repentance at her heart. “There is no reason why it should.”

“ Well, well—I hope not,” he repeated, and prepared to go on his way.

He found Lord Singleton at home and alone, and writing in his study—all three very unusual things at that hour of the day.

He was sitting at his writing-table in deep thought. He had been pondering on a question, which, for the last few hours, had been agitating his mind. It had been suddenly presented by his conscience during the night, and though resisted, had been presented again and again. It was this :—was it necessary for him—would it be most seemly for him—to give up Miss Moore’s guardianship into other hands, according to the power left with him by her father? The suggestion was obviously fortified by many recommendations ; but when he came to consider the point, it was beyond his strength to yield to it. He could not sever himself from the hope of redeeming the past—he could not trust her

happiness to any hands but his own—he could not part from an office so long and so proudly cherished. To the objections presented, he replied by the strong and firm assurance that he would undo what he had done; and before Mr. Beauchamp's entrance, he had decided that the sacrifice was not required—nay, that under all the circumstances, it was the best and wisest course, and most for her welfare and comfort, that no change or noise should be made. Thus, wishes warp the heart of the honestest; for, certainly, by becoming a lover, he had placed himself in a new and difficult position.

“I am writing about Miss Moore's affairs,” Lord Singleton observed, as if he thought an explanation necessary for his sedentary occupation. “My head was in a maze yesterday, but I am all right to-day.”

“And I am partly come to speak to you about Miss Moore's affairs,” said Mr. Beau-

champ; "I had better do it at once;" and he shortly detailed the plan Sybil had made known to him.

Lord Singleton started from his seat with a glow of passion on his face, and exclaimed—

"Mrs. Berkeley—impossible! I will never allow it!"

"Are you acquainted with Mrs. Berkeley?" Mr. Beauchamp inquired, in some surprise at his vehemence.

"Yes, yes—very well," he replied, shortly; but having so said, he began to recollect himself; and, after begging Mr. Beauchamp to sit down, and walking to the window to breathe a breath of cooling air, he said, quietly—"I beg your pardon, Mr. Beauchamp, for speaking so intemperately—I do know Mrs. Berkeley, and I do not like her. But my likings and dislikings are nothing, if she is a fit and proper person for Miss Moore to be with. I will consider about it. Tell me, is she anxious to go?"

we are on the subject, you must allow me to say how admirable your conduct has been in this respect. A false step might have done her irreparable mischief, making her an object of comment and idle gossip—but your behaviour . . .”

“Have done, Mr. Beauchamp !” Lord Singleton exclaimed, with an expression of intense pain on his countenance ; “ I beg your pardon,” he added, civilly, “ but such flattery is odious to me.”

“ I beg your pardon,” Mr. Beauchamp also meekly observed, “ I meant no flattery. I will say no more.”

“ Let the matter rest for a few hours if you please,” Lord Singleton said next. “ I will consider of it before night.”

“ Thank you. I need say no more to her till the evening. Will you be so good as to give your opinion on this letter,” and they proceeded to business.

When Lord Singleton was left alone, he tramped up and down the room, giving vent to his disturbance in expressions of varied kinds of emotion, now of anger, now of sorrow. "Oh! Sybil, Sybil," was his first mournful exclamation, "was it needful to punish me thus—I would not have molested you." Then at the next turn stamping with anger—"Those Berkeleys! I would not trust them with a child's welfare—and *hers*! It must be prevented, but how?"

In his perplexity, he bethought him of applying to Annette. Her influence over Sybil was great, the greater because it was intangible, never consciously exerted, save and except from the constant desire that possessed her, to draw all that came within her sphere to love good and hate evil as she did.

Annette might prevail by persuasion, where he had no longer power to command. If persuasion failed, it would be something that

Sybil's mind should be thoroughly warned and prepared to withstand the evils that might assail her.

## CHAPTER IV.

“There is a grief that cannot feel,  
It leaves a wound that will not heal ;—  
My heart grew cold,—it felt not then,—  
When shall it cease to feel again ?”

MONTGOMERY.

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LORD SINGLETON trusted to meet Annette in the course of the day, and to be able to draw her aside without observation ; for this purpose, after luncheon, he walked towards Barnsley. On his way thither he met Mr. Horner, who mentioned to him that Mrs. Beauchamp, with Miss Moore and Miss Zoé, were at the school.

“And not Miss Beauchamp ?”

No, he understood Miss Beauchamp had caught cold the day before.



“Then I am in luck,” said Lord Singleton, “for I was in search of her;” and wishing Mr. Horner good-bye, he walked rapidly on to the Cottage.

In the dining-room he found Annette alone, according to his desire. He knocked at the window and asked if he might come in. The faint blush and bright smile of pleasure that always greeted him, greeted him now, as she threw the window up and admitted him. She saw care on his brow, and guessed he was coming to her for sympathy. Most persons have one duty, one office of affection or charity to which they spring more readily than to all beside. It was much to Annette to be made partaker of Lord Singleton’s hopes and pleasures; but to be his *consolée*, that was the joy that had no name or bounds.

“I suppose I must shut the window,” he said, closing it carefully. “Horner tells me you have got a cold.”

“Mamma says so,” she said smiling, “I

don't know it, but I was obliged to submit to stay at home."

"I am very glad you did. My dear Annette, I wish very much to speak to you, and I was on my way to Barnsley in hopes of finding you when I met Horner; but this is much better. Are they likely to be home soon?"

"No, I think not for an hour or two."

"That is a comfort; then I can speak at my ease. It is about this visit of Miss Moore's. You know, I suppose, that she wishes to go away?"

"Yes. She told me she thought she ought to go; I am sure she is sorry to do it."

"And why ought to go?" he inquired, anxiously.

"The Berkeleys have been very kind to her, and write very kindly now, and it is an old engagement, and she seemed to think, too, that it was a pity to lose an opportunity of seeing so much—and perhaps it is."

"What do you think of the Berkeleys, Annette?"

"I don't like them at all," she replied laughing; "but that is nothing. There is a class of people that I always dislike, but mamma does not like me to say so. I only judge of them by their letters and by what Sybil says. Very likely they are much nicer and better than I think."

"No, they are not. I have a very bad opinion of the Berkeleys. I wish, Annette, you could persuade Miss Moore not to go."

"I did try; but that, however, was only for our private pleasure, and I did not say as much as I wished, because mamma seemed to think it was selfish. I will certainly try again, if you wish it."

"I do wish it. Is she very determined?"

"Yes, very. After I had said a very little, she begged me not to go on, as she had made up her mind to go, and it was painful to her

to have to refuse. But I can't understand why she has made up her mind, for I am sure she is sorry to go—more than sorry. She hardly likes to speak of it at all."

"You must try again, Annette, never mind giving her pain, it is for her good."

"You disapprove, then, of her going to these Berkeleys?" Annette inquired after a moment. "May I say that—may I say that I speak, from your wish, or from your opinion."

"Yes," he replied, in the restrained, hesitating way in which as yet he had conducted the conversation.

"Can you give me some good reasons?" Annette asked. "Sybil knows I hate the Berkeleys, we have had many quarrels about it. But she knows also that I know nothing, so my opinion is not worth much."

"I happen to know the Berkeleys very well," Lord Singleton replied. "I made Mr.

Berkeley's acquaintance two or three years ago from our being interested in the same business—some canal business. He invited me to his house, and I went two or three times, and found it agreeable enough. There are always people worth meeting there. It is a kind of society that is very taking, and that I like better than most society, but that does not make it good. It is not good for anybody, but people who can take care of themselves, or have nobody to take care of them, must run their chance. That is not the case with Miss Moore. I am grieved, indeed, to think of her going among such a set."

"And Mrs. Berkeley I am afraid is not a person likely to take care of Sybil, or to think of care of that kind. I should fancy not from her letters."

"Mrs. Berkeley is the worst of the lot. I am not going to say a word against her character. I daresay she is a very well-behaved

woman as the world goes ; but she is what I call a dangerous woman. She lives on nothing but excitement ; so as she gets that, she does not care one straw who she admits into her house—man or woman, it is all the same ; character or no character,—no matter so that they are lively and clever. She herself is very pretty, not very young, I suppose, but very good-looking, and well got up ; and she likes admiration of a pretty strong kind ; but she is not ill-natured, and is well pleased to have others admired also. The pleasure and excitement of having a beauty to bring forward would quite make up to her for the loss of her own lovers. I beg your pardon, Annette, for the word, perhaps it is too strong ; but I wish you to see the sort of woman it is, that you may tell Miss Moore the impression a man has of the house ; and I am not at all singular in my opinion. If I had a sister, I would sooner make her a nun at once, than trust her in

such a thoughtless, unprincipled set ; and Miss Moore so young, so beautiful—it makes me mad to think of it.”

“But, Lord Singleton,” Annette said, earnestly, “if this really is your impression of the house, I do not think you *ought* to allow Sybil to go. I know,” she added, quickly, “that too much authority does not do for her, and is not, perhaps, right from you, but this seems to me a case for it. If you would not let your sister go, surely you should not let her.”

“No, Annette, I should not,” he said, sadly ; “it is quite a case for authority, but mine is gone. I have lost the right to interfere.”

“But how ? not that money affair. You wrong Sybil, you really do, to think so much of it. If I can guess what she feels, by what I should feel myself, it would make me doubly wish to be guided by you.”

“It is not that,” he said, sadly, again and then walked to the window and stood looking out.

A chill—a deadly chill—struck upon Annette's heart; how, why, or whence it came, she knew not. She sat breathless and immoveable, waiting for him to speak again.

“Annette, can I trust you?” he said, suddenly returning, a deep flush on his cheek.

She moved her lips in acquiescence. It was all she could do.

“It is for her sake—*Sybil's*, I do not wish it known—to save *her* from awkwardness and pain. Oh! Annette, Annette, I have done that which makes me mad to think upon. I have spoken to her words I had no right to speak; I have told her how I loved, adored, her; and what right have I now to act as a father would? I was surely mad when I did it, and it was but just that she should scorn me as she did.” He turned away again, threw open the window, and hung his body out.

There are climates in which the sun goes down suddenly and while it is day. No twi-



light prepares the mind for the shadows of night.—So suddenly went down the sun of Annette's existence; one single moment revealing to her on what hope she lived, and that it was lost for ever.—“What a single word can do!”

It was fortunate for her that Lord Singleton was so overwhelmed with his own reflections and feelings, that he had no time for observation; her countenance must otherwise have betrayed her. The rapidly changing colour as he spoke, the sickness of her heart's terror painted on her cheek, and finally, the dead paleness of utter conviction and despair.

She sat for some minutes immovable, just so conscious as to know she must not dare to move, lest her hidden soul should be revealed by signs beyond her power to control.

Struck at last by her silence, Lord Singleton returned. He did not think he depended on her sympathy; but more is depended on

than any of us know in our intercourse with each other; and the more sympathy, of help, or encouragement, or whatever kind it be that can be given, the better for us and for all.

"Ah, Annette," he said, "you condemn me. I knew you would—you must; but it is not the less bitter."

"I do not, indeed," she said, forcing out the words; but the first effort was made with pain and constraint.

"Yes, but you do, Annette, and you must. I know very well there is no excuse;—and yet—but you do not understand, you cannot,—how should you,—how such feelings do master one at times, and one feels they *must* be spoken. It seems as if the mere indulgence of speaking them was worth living and dying for. You cannot understand it, how should you?"

"Yes, I do understand," she said, with (if he had understood it) an intense sympathy in

her tone ; for she, too, felt at that moment that her heart must break beneath the agony of concealment.

“ I do not say it in excuse,” he continued, not heeding her, “ for what does one live for, but to overcome one’s temptations. It is a very plain truth,—she never gave me cause to speak, and I never should have done it. I have vowed I would not day and night, month after month, and I was as confident I never should, as I suppose Eve was she should never disobey.—And there it is done, and I have grieved her ; and myself. . . . Oh ! Annette, I have not dared yet to think about myself. You do not know how I have been building my life’s happiness upon her. A long while I did not know it myself, but ever since that winter’s day I have known it too well, and all I have done has been—oh ! fool and madman—to please her, and shew her I could do my duty in spite of ingratitude and disappointment. I meant to

win her at last, to force her to love me at last — never to give her up, but when the time came I was guardian no more, to take her, and cherish her, and guard her for ever and ever. And that's all over," and he dashed away to the window again, and hung himself out.

A sound in his voice as of bitter tears in his heart or his eyes, gave Annette the courage she wanted. She followed him, full of pity, to the window.

"*Must* it be all over?" she inquired.

He looked round.

"Don't come to the window, my dear Annette," he said, kindly, and suddenly closing it. "What a selfish brute I have been, and you look as pale as —— I never saw anything look so pale as you do to-day."

She turned away in bitterness of spirit. She felt she could better have borne scorn and coldness than such words of kindness now. What was his kindness now?

"What did you say?" he said, pursuing her "all over? Oh! yes—for ever. Oh! Annette, she scorned me as if I was the scum of the earth, and so I am; she is perfectly right; she cannot scorn me as I scorn myself. Yes, yes—all over! I never shall offend her any more; that she may depend upon. But don't let us talk of this; what can it matter? A hundred years hence, who will care what happened to-day? My dear Annette, you look ready to cry. You are very kind, but don't think about me any more. I tell you, for myself I don't care—I shall soon get over all that: it's what I have *done* that maddens me."

"I see nothing so very strange," Annette said, tremulously—"you loved her—so did we all—who could help it?"

"It's not the love," he said, with vehemence. "I tell you I cherished that—lived upon it. It is the shame of having told her, when it was my duty to watch over her and guard her

from such things—it is the shame of feeling I drive her from her rest and refuge into the bad world. Of course it is from me she is flying—I see that pretty plain. I forced myself here yesterday, that she might see how calm and strong I could be ; but she cannot trust me—how should she ? I am sure I find it hard to trust myself now.”

“I will do all I can to persuade her,” Annette said, after a moment’s silence on both sides. “But may I speak as if I knew all ? I should say better things if I did.”

“I leave it to you, my dear Annette—I trust you much more than myself now. I put it all in your hands ; and I thank you a thousand times for listening so patiently to all my ravings and confessions. You are too good to me—that is the only thing. I think I hear voices, and I don’t feel up to a meeting just now ; so good-bye, and thank you.”

He shook her hand with great warmth as he

passed, and then hurriedly left the room by the other side.

And Annette, too, rushed away—flew to her room, bolted her door, and threw herself on her bed. His trust and confidence—there might come a time when it would comfort her, but now it was an added bitterness. It felt to her aching heart like a mockery. All this long while, when she had felt herself so needful to him—when her very life-blood had beat only as for him—she had been nothing. The future she felt a power to bear, but for the past!—to be discarded thence!—her feelings were much like Othello's.

“Patience, thou young and rose-lipped cherubim,  
There look grim as hell.”

The body is a helpmeet to the mind; quickly shares its sorrows, and, by sharing, soothes them; whether by acute pain, or by exhaustion, or by a faintness as of death, withdrawing the mind from pangs that are acuter than any pains the body gives.

## CHAPTER V.

“And for a cloak, what is there that can be  
So difficult to pierce as gaiety?  
Too dazzling to be scorned, the haughty brow  
Seems to hide something it would not avow.  
But rainbow words, light laugh, and thoughtless jest,  
These are the bars, the curtain to the breast.”

L. E. L.

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FROM childhood upwards, nothing is more strange than to watch the power of human nature in concealing mental pain. A child carries about its feelings in silence, though wounded perhaps with a violence which, comparatively speaking, nothing in after life can equal; and would rather bear on, would even



rather die, child as it is, than reveal the pain that devours it. The dread of a rude touch, or a cold word, of pity contemptuously expressed, or pity expressed without tact—these things drive the human spirit to solitude, and make it strong to suffer and be still. The pains of unappreciated affection, not of one class only, are those that most shrink from light and comfort, though they perhaps, except of one class, might by light and comfort be the soonest healed; and perhaps even that exception ought not to be made, if it were not that other feelings of human nature seem to bid them live and die, like violets veiled in their leaves, the more sweet and precious from the shadows amid which they grow.

Be this power of concealment however to be commended, or not, it is one of the strong qualities of human nature; and they are weak indeed who do not, in some degree, share in its strength. Often abused, often causing added misery, it

yet is in itself discipline to the soul, not only as practising it in fortitude, and purifying it by suffering, but far more by sending it forth in its weakness to seek a strength beyond human strength, and to incline it to hear a Voice of sympathy, which, if a buzz of many voices consoled, would be but faintly heard, if heard at all.

Annette's colds were often severe ones, and not unfrequently accompanied by headache. Mrs. Beauchamp was not, therefore, much surprised when, in going in search of her daughter an hour afterwards, she found the room darkened and Annette on her bed. She gave her a composing draught, which she was in the habit of taking on such occasions, and left her to rest. An hour or two later, Annette came down, pale indeed, and evidently suffering, but pronouncing herself well, and taking her usual place and post in the occupations of the family. Her body had helped

her mind, and by its faintness and weariness had dulled, for the present, the sense of a misery that was consuming her; while the intense desire to perform her task well, gave to the day a kind of excitement which supported her.

When Sybil rose to go to her own room Annette followed her.

"May I come in?" she asked, "I want to talk to you."

"What about, Annette?" she said, turning suddenly round and looking at her.

"I will tell you that presently," she replied, slightly smiling; "I have several things I wish to say."

"Do you want to persuade me not to go, Annette, because if you do, I must tell you at once that it will be in vain. I have made up my mind."

"Yes, it is about that; but, dear Sybil, do let me speak."

Sybil threw off her bonnet and sat down ; as she did so, she said, " If you only knew half how sorry I am to go, Annette, you would leave me alone. I have made up my mind to go because I think it best, and having made up my mind, I shall hold to it—but the regret I feel is so great that I am ready to call myself a fool for it ; only that perhaps it is not foolish to feel love for goodness, and gratitude for kindness. Don't answer me, Annette," she added quickly, " for I shall cry if you do, and that is not a thing I like."

" Why do you think you ought to go, Sybil ?" Annette gravely asked.

" I think it best," she said shortly, " the Berkeleys were very kind to me."

" Is that your only reason ? Is that the real reason ? If Mrs. Berkeley had written last week should you have gone ?"

Sybil coloured deeply, and said, " My dear Annette you have taken upon yourself to

be very inquisitive into my doings and motives. I have many reasons. I give one of them, and one is enough."

"I think your reason is," Annette said, pressing her hands tightly together that she might speak the words calmly, "that you may get away from Lord Singleton—and, oh! Sybil, is that kind?"

"My dear Annette!" Sybil exclaimed again, in great surprise, "what can you mean?"

"He has been here this afternoon, and, oh! Sybil, so unhappy. He disapproves of these Berkeleys, and he seems to have good reasons for it; they cannot be nice people, nor Mrs. Berkeley a woman you could trust or like; and he feels that you are rushing to them to fly from him. Don't be angry, Sybil, but he told me everything, and will you let me tell you what *I* think? He may have given you offence often, and perhaps just offence; all

people make mistakes; but if he has, it has been out of his love and care for you; and should you feel anger for that care? is it a thing to cast away and waste? I don't speak of his love of another kind, that I know cannot be helped; it is not our will that makes that; but when you know how you have pained him on that account, is it a moment to add unkindness and contempt, and to throw back all his care in his face, and say you will not let him care for you? If I were you I should feel, on the contrary, that I would do all in the world to comfort him, and to show how I trusted him again."

"My dear Annette, how excited you are," Sybil said, looking earnestly at her, "how you speak!"

"I know I do speak seriously," Annette replied, with great effort, a blush she could not control overspreading her face, "but it is because I think it a serious thing. Serious for you to run into a life of temptation, and serious, very serious, as you well know to him."

Sybil looked at her with a keen, grave glance, then walked to the window, and stood there for a time that seemed endless to the expecting Annette. When she turned back, her face was still extremely grave. "I have made up my mind, Annette," she said, "I will go."

"Oh! Sybil," she cried, imploringly, "I hoped I had touched you. I hoped I had made you sorry to grieve him so much."

"You did, Annette, and that is what I have been thinking about. I have been considering a great many things, and, upon the whole, I think it best I should go, best for him, best for me, and best——"

She paused and hesitated.

Annette felt as if she knew what was coming; a sudden dread seized her, and she rose up hastily. The movement, however, gave her power, and she said gravely—

"I think, Sybil, you have decided wrongly.

It never can be *best* to act against warning and against kindness, unless there is a higher duty to fulfil. There is none here; but I can say no more than I have done. Think about it, and, perhaps, you will repent."

"No, Annette, my mind is made up."

And without more words the conference came to an end.

The dread, the terror that Sybil had pierced the secrets of her soul, gave Annette a strength she could not otherwise have had. She had felt that afternoon that nothing ever again could draw a smile from her lips; the inward fount of joy seemed at one touch to be withered and dried. Yet a few hours afterwards she was laughing with more than her usual gaiety; but there are many fountains of smiles and laughter, and the unsuspecting cannot always detect the spring from which they come.

While Annette laughed, Sybil sat impenetrably grave.



"I do not understand why Miss Moore leaves us," observed Mr. Beauchamp, to his wife. "She is in very poor spirits to-day."

"That which is pleasant in the end is often painful in the beginning," observed Mrs. Beauchamp, whose thoughts seemed naturally to fall into axioms; "and a change naturally produces thought, especially in one of Miss Moore's character."

"Possibly," he said, and relieved himself from further consideration.

When Annette went up to bed she asked her mother's leave to write a note to Lord Singleton. The question was asked with involuntary sadness, for she suddenly felt how vain had been all her mother's rules and cares. But Mrs. Beauchamp was neither suspicious nor observant, and the sadness was unremarked. She made her usual opposition and her usual concession, disapproved, but on such an occasion felt justified in consenting.

The tears and thoughts that letter cost it would be hard to tell. Words suddenly appeared to be endued with so full a meaning, that Annette scarcely dared to write, lest she should be her own betrayer. When the note was written it was this—

“DEAR LORD SINGLETON,

“I write to-night to save you from suspense.” (She might have added, to save myself the agony of another meeting.) “I am sorry to tell you that I have failed to do what you wished. Sybil was very kind, but is resolved for many reasons to go, and I think it is useless to urge her more. You have done what you could, that is one comfort, and another is, that she is now too good for any bad influences to taint or injure her. Perhaps, absence will but turn her heart more kindly towards us all. I wish I had been able to fulfil your wishes better.

“Yours affectionately,

“ANNETTE BEAUCHAMP.”

In the course of the following morning, to Annette's surprise, and to Sybil's no less so, Lord Singleton suddenly entered the drawing-room, tapping at the door with—"May I come in?" like his old self. A heightened colour, a slight hurry of voice, betrayed to the conscious the effort he was making, but he was too resolved and determined in his mood for any unconscious observer to discover agitation.

He shook hands with all, and then, to her astonishment, composedly seated himself by Sybil. "I am going away for a few days," he said; "and, as I find that you are determined to leave us, I came this morning to wish you good-bye and a pleasant journey. I hope you will enjoy yourself."

Sybil was as nearly awkward in her thanks as she (graceful and self-possessed as were her manners), was able to be;—many strange varied feelings agitated her.

"Scotland is your destination, is it not?"

he enquired, as if anxious to make all easy and comfortable between them.

She acquiesced; and then, ashamed to be less at her ease than he was, exerted herself to make an answering enquiry—“Had he ever been in Scotland?”

“Lord Singleton has been a great traveller,” observed Mrs. Beauchamp.

“Yes, indeed, I have. I have been almost over the world; but, for my part, I never went anywhere where my chief wish was not to be at home again.”

“Yet intelligent curiosity has merit, Lord Singleton.”

“Yes, of course, Mrs. Beauchamp. Don't suppose I was boasting of my want of interest. Intelligent curiosity is much to be commended, and I will not damp Miss Moore's expectations. I hope she will have much pleasure.”

As he spoke he rose up, and said he had only looked in for an instant. Then, turning

from the rest of the party, he held out his hand to Sybil, to wish her good-bye—as he did so, murmuring low, “Forgive me, before you go, for the pain I have caused you.”

He scarcely waited to see the result of his words, yet did see a grave, subdued, softened glance raised, for one instant, to his; and, in that softened instant, she looked so lovely to his eyes, that he turned away with an aching heart.

Another eye saw Sybil’s face, and with a heart as aching as his own. From the moment of his entrance, Annette’s eyes had been watching them with a kind of fascinated contemplation, and now only averted them when the full assurance was given her, by her own senses, of what before she knew full well.

From her painful abstraction she was roused by Lord Singleton’s cheerful “Good bye,” and, looking up, received from him, together with a nod and a smile, a little note,

dropped into her work-basket. It was but this :—

“MY DEAR ANNETTE,—A thousand thanks  
You did all you could, and no one could have  
done it better. It is best as it is.

“Ever yours affectionately,

“S.”

A dead silence followed his departure. Sybil resumed her book, and read intently. Annette plunged at once into painful and absorbing thought. She supposed the time would come when she should feel his kindness less acutely, but now it seemed more wounding than all besides—that kindness which had so won, so blinded, so humbled her.

It was Zoé who made some comments on what had passed.

“Mamma, Lord Singleton goes away much oftener than he used to do.”

“He is less settled, certainly ; but we have

no business with his movements, Zoé," was her mother's reply.

"No, mamma, of course; I only make a remark."

A pause.

"Mamma, what does 'in love' mean?"

"Nothing you have any business with, Zoé," said Mrs. Beauchamp, hastily.

"No, mamma, of course—only I heard Priscilla say, last night, that she had heard Biddulph tell Mrs. Dawson that he was sure Lord Singleton was in love."

Mrs. Beauchamp looked up quickly, and was struck with admiration at seeing the quiet and attentive faces of her daughter and Sybil—both too much occupied with their employments to attend to Zoé's communication. She only replied—"Much nonsense is talked in this world, Zoé,—you must learn not to listen to it."

## CHAPTER VI.

“God release our dying sister,  
Beauteous blight hath sadly kissed her ;  
Whiter than the wild white roses,  
Famine in her face discloses—  
Mute submission, patience holy,  
Passing fair, but passing slowly.”

EBENEZER ELLIOTT.

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THE day after Sybil's departure, Annette was seized with a violent fit of coughing, and broke a bloodvessel. For an hour or two, terror filled the hearts of her parents ; but the arrival of Mr. Willis, the apothecary, quieted their fears—quieted them at first, and soon altogether relieved them. The bloodvessel was in no dangerous part ; Miss Beau-



champ was apparently in a good state of health ; some over exertion must have brought on the attack, and a short time would, he hoped, restore her. Meantime, profound quiet was ordered, and enforced. Annette remained on a sofa in her own room.

To the order thus given, and strictly acted upon, Mrs. Beauchamp had expected some opposition on the part of her daughter ; but none was made. Hour after hour, and day after day, Annette remained on her couch, pale, quiet, unoccupied ; making no complaint, seeking no amusement, suggesting no change ; grateful for the attentions shown her, smiling her thanks while silence was imposed, speaking them when permitted to speak ; but seemingly rather submitting to, than desiring them. It was rather the exhausted patience of a long sufferer, than the struggling submission of one accustomed to health and movement.

After two weeks, Mr. Beauchamp felt

annoyed at this exhaustion, and, representing his fears forcibly to Mr. Willis, added an expression of anxiety to call in further advice. But his opinion was the same as before. The exhaustion was the consequence of some over exertion, and it required time to re-animate her frame. There was no disease. Patience was all that was required ; and again all fears were lulled to sleep.

Lord Singleton was constant in his inquiries. He submitted at first to the natural restriction, which excluded him from the number of Annette's visitors ; but, after a fortnight had passed, he became weary of this exclusion, and one day very earnestly begged to be allowed to see her. "You may trust me, Mrs. Beauchamp—I will be as quiet as any lamb," he said. "I dare say a new face will do her good. People so soon get sluggish and indolent when they are ill. Pray let me go in."

Mrs. Beauchamp, notwithstanding all her prudence, was for once entirely on his side of the question; she longed for anything that would animate Annette into pleasure. She would not have asked it, but since he proposed the visit, she went up to her daughter's room, to mention the request, and give the desired permission; nothing doubting that it would be accepted with joy.

"I have brought a request from Lord Singleton, Annette," she said, "which I hope will gratify you. He is extremely anxious to see you, and I have given my consent. We will wheel your sofa into my dressing-room, and I think the visit will do you good."

But to her mother's disappointment, Annette refused the proffered pleasure; she spoke with the same gentle gratitude that had characterized her manner during her illness, but with an assurance that she was unequal to the effort, so earnest and determined, that Mrs. Beauchamp dared not press the point further.

She returned with her refusal to Lord Singleton. He seemed disappointed, and even hurt, but there was nothing for it but acquiescence. He only begged that the very first moment Annette did seem equal to see him, he might be sent for.

When Mrs. Beauchamp told her husband of Annette's refusal, he expressed a disappointment equal to her own; but chiefly, as it appeared, on Lord Singleton's account. "He looks very ill, to my eyes," he observed, "and is in very poor spirits. It always does him good to see Annette, and I am truly sorry he should not be allowed to do so; at the same time, Annette is always ready enough, so I am sure it must be because she really does feel unequal." He looked grave again, as he added this, but in the face of positive assurance to the contrary, it was not in nature for an easy and sanguine mind to be long fearful.

And Annette, meanwhile, as she lay thus

calm and still before them;—what was her history? *Not* “a blank,” far, far otherwise. In her mind was taking place the most severe struggle that human nature knows, the soul endeavouring to sever itself, in submission to God’s decree, from its idol—whatever that idol, be it love or ambition, wife or child, friend or guide, faith or country, may be.—From the first moment of her illness, she had looked with clear eyes to the end. She had seen death, had felt death; but that consciousness did not bring to her the relief it brings to many a broken heart. In life her idol was, and to life her heart tenaciously clung. Nor was this all. With the natural solemnity of a religious mind, she had, in the face of death, examined into her fitness for it; and in her mind she found past, present, future, but one idol, and that not in Heaven, but on earth. She looked back, and saw for the source and motive of every action, *Lord Singleton*. Through every year of her

mature life, her mind had been fastened on *him*. She had seen with *his* eyes, thought with his thoughts, for *him* were her labours, in him was her pleasure, and now he stood between her and Heaven, and Heaven was not Heaven, because he was not there. This is idolatry. It may reign long and be undiscovered, but when the sight comes, it is an appalling sight.

*Good idols.* It is a thought but little dwelt upon. Preachers preach, and do not reach it. They preach against folly and vice; the dangers of riches, and the dangers of poverty; against the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; but against good idols but few words are said; and yet there are a class of minds who by good idols alone can fall. The passionate love of doing good to the body and the soul; of ordering a home and household, and young children, in virtue and godliness; the passionate admiration of good

character ; the unselfish devotion to one human being's good ; the clinging of the soul to a holy guide ;—these are the chief of good idols, and by these many souls, not for ever, we trust, but saved as brands from the burning, have fallen.

It seems a strange thing that there can be excess in the love of good. "Make Thou Thy servant to delight in that which is good," is the most perfect prayer to be taught the young, or to be repeated in age ; and yet the fact remains the same. The good may become an idol ; and then how is the fine gold dimmed ; from that moment corruption enters in ; the good begins to decay, and it can be through suffering only that its proper lustre is renewed. For this, perhaps, the disappointments, the inconsistencies, the infirmities and wanderings, that meet the eye on every side ; till in very weariness, as George Herbert says, the heart is "tossed to rest" in Heaven.

Day by day, in Annette's silent soul, did this struggle proceed. Either for life or for death the command had gone forth, which separated her from him in whom her heart had been bound up; but he reigned within that heart as tenaciously as before. So entwined was he with the strings of her life, that she scarcely could conceive of a state of existence without him. The evil terrified her; she shrank from death under a sense of her unworthiness; but the evil which she owned and mourned clung to her still.

It is in such kinds of mental suffering that many have longed for the relief the ordinance of confession in the Church of Rome presents; and undoubtedly there are cases in which nothing but confession and help can, humanly speaking, bring relief; and if it be so, to whatsoever Church the sufferer may belong, no dread, or fear, or shame should prevent the relief being sought. Yet, if the soul be strong



enough, it is more healthful, more invigorating, more truly regenerating, to endure, to fight, to conquer alone, than to seek any earthly relief. The Mediator between God and man was human in infirmities like ours, but divine in strength. This tells us that nothing but divine strength can, in the end, support the soul ; and the deeper this truth is felt and understood, the sooner comes salvation. To all who sincerely seek it, peace will come at last ; but, though the conflict may be more severe, the peace is surer and more perfect, if it be won from Him alone who alone can fully grant it.

Annette did not argue thus, but, from natural impulse—from the natural shrinkings that belonged to the features of her struggle—struggled on alone. To her mother she dared not confess ; the very cares her mother had taken made it impossible ; to her father, tender and pitiful, she might, yet, for her

mother's sake, could not, even had he sought to find a mental cause for her bodily disease. To Mr. Horner it would have been an undreamed of thing; and yet, perhaps, so poor is our power of judging of our fellow creatures, he might have helped her where she needed it most. Alone, therefore, she suffered and struggled, and through her struggles faded day by day.

A fortnight after this time, the church so much thought of, so much talked of, and which had been lately finished, was consecrated. The depression of Lord Singleton's spirits, which Mr. Beauchamp had noticed, had been, before this time, noticed by many others, but never so generally noticed as on this day.

This day saw accomplished, and most satisfactorily accomplished, a great work. The church had, of course, exceeded by far its original estimate, but it was finished according to Lord Singleton's taste, with perfect simplicity—a solemn and beautiful simplicity.

There was no disappointment in the performance of his intentions. A young clergyman, one of a thousand, had been found ; one who united to Mr. Horner's amiableness and integrity, a wise mind and sound judgment. All promised well, all looked smilingly for the future prospects of Rotherham. A year before, this day of consecration would have been to Lord Singleton a day of excessive excitement. But it was not so now. Even the degree of interest he showed, seemed to have more of effort in it than of genuine feeling. He was grave and quiet, and it was remarked by many, that during the whole service he stood with his hands over his eyes.

This attitude was commented on, and gave rise to various conjectures. It was universally decided by the wise gossips, who talked over the subject, that some kind of feeling overcame him, but what that feeling was, was a subject on which a decision was less

easily made. It is needless to repeat the suppositions thrown out. All conjectures were equally in the wrong.

A day or two after the consecration, Lord Singleton again disappeared from his house—without his valet, and altogether in as mysterious a manner as on the occasion of his visit to Dublin. Biddulph, who had his own convictions, privately told Mrs. Dawson, and others that my lord was gone to Scotland—but was forced to own his mistake when, the morning after his departure, Lord Singleton wrote from Birmingham, to order his horses to meet him at an appointed place the very next evening.

He was returning home that evening in deep thought, when, close to Barnsley, he met Mr. Willis, the apothecary.—He pulled up his horse to inquire after Annette Beauchamp. Mr. Willis shook his head in some perplexity.

“I don’t know what to say, my lord. As far as I can see, there is no disease,—so I have

said from the first, and I know I am right when I say it; but she does not rally as I expected she would. I have just been advising Mr. Beauchamp to take another opinion. He agrees, of course, and we have sent for Dr. Roper. He is to come this evening."

"We must see what he says, I suppose," observed Lord Singleton, "but do you think, Mr. Willis, it could do her any possible harm to see me? I think it would do her good. I think they bottle her up too close."

"Indeed, my lord, I think the same, and I know I am right when I say it. She is suffering from exhaustion only, as far as I can tell—an exhaustion much more of the nerves and spirits than of the vital powers. She requires change and amusement. We must, of course, be guided by Dr. Roper; but, in my opinion, a stimulus is what is required, and I know I am right when I say it."

The opinion of Dr. Roper agreed in every

point with that of Mr. Willis, and proved how right he was when he said it. After the strictest examination, Annette's lungs were pronounced to be free from disease, and though he admitted a tendency to disease, he gave it as his decided opinion, that an early recovery might be anticipated. Care and quiet were naturally recommended; but there was a recommendation, almost equally strong, in favour of change and distraction of mind. The patient was not to be forced, but was to be enticed, into exertion and amusement.

When Lord Singleton heard the opinion that had been expressed, he thought of Sybil, and of the advantages her presence would give. Mrs. Beauchamp was dry and dull—no exertion on her part could make her otherwise. Sybil, on the contrary, from the versatility of her powers, was the very person to enliven a sick room. He pondered deeply on the question, and at length decided on the course to be

pursued. He had driven her away—he would bring her back.

Before, however, he acted on his decision, he determined he would see Annette, and judge for himself, as to her wishes and feelings.

For the fourth time he sent up his earnest appeal, to be allowed to visit her.

Mrs. Beauchamp was as anxious as himself that Annette should make the effort. But she would again have failed in her desire, if Mr. Beauchamp had not happened to be present when the message was delivered.

He enforced the request by these few words—“I wish you would, Annette; Willis says, it will do *you* good, and I am sure it will do *him* good. You cannot think how low and spiritless he is grown.”

Violent had been the self-denial which had shut him out from the sight of her longing eyes, but it had been the dutiful promptings

of a spirit as conscientious to conquer, as to own the ill. She was not one, however, to think of self, not even the salvation of her own soul, when another's good was placed before her. When the request was enforced in that form, she was resolute no more. Permission was given, and an appointment made for the following day.

Lord Singleton arrived with the punctuality of eagerness. He hung upon Annette's sympathy far more than he was at all aware of. In the present depression of his spirits he had become conscious of a need that never had struck him in the days of his self-complacency. The need of friends. Too full of his own purposes and plans hitherto to need friends, he had sought but little to make them ; happy in himself, he had asked no help or sympathy from others ; but in his depression, the solitude of his soul became to him a conscious thing. The large house in which he had lived, filling



it with his dreams and aspirations, seemed desolate now that he aspired no more. Such being his present state of feeling, he thought even with longing of his early friend and constant companion, and with something of nervous eagerness, hastened to his appointment.

Annette had been wheeled into her mother's dressing-room, and the gay sunlight fell upon her face.

"Are you ill, Annette, do you feel equal to this visit?" asked her mother anxiously, struck by her deadly paleness, as she arranged her couch and prepared to leave her.

Annette smiled, and re-assured her mother, and Lord Singleton was admitted; but a day and night of struggle to prepare herself had done more than its due share of work on her wasted frame; and when Lord Singleton looked in her face, he read with a shock of feeling, he scarcely could conceal that death was there.

In silence he pressed her hand, and in

silence sat down. The silence gave Annette time to still her fluttering pulses, and when he spoke she had surmounted the agitation, which for a moment seemed about to break her heart at once and for ever.

"You have been very unkind to me, Annette," he said at last, looking sadly at her, feeling that he had been deprived of a pleasure that was fading fast away.

"I did not mean to be unkind," she replied, with a faint smile and a fitting colour.

"You did not mean it, but you were unkind. Why was I to be shut out?"

"I have tried to shut out all the earth," she said, with something of solemnity, after a moment's silence, "I must leave it, and I have much to do to be content."

"Leave it, Annette!" he exclaimed, with more of sadness than surprise, in his tone, so fully had the conviction of her approaching fate impressed his mind.

“I mean, that I know I must die, and I am not fit. I have tried to close my eyes to this world; but it has been a hard task, and is so still.”

“Why do you think so ill of yourself? Willis does not.”

“I have warnings,” she said, with a slight smile. “But I have said so to no one but you. I dare not tell them yet. You must not repeat what I say.”

“Feelings are often mistaken, Annette, God grant yours may be.”

He sat looking at her with a sadness and affection, that was at once comfort to her and agony. At last he said,

“I know it is selfish for me to speak, or think of myself, but, my dear Annette, if what you say is true, what is to become of me? I have no friend but you. I shall be left very desolate.” And tears, which she saw and felt, sprang into his eyes.

"I wish you better things than my friendship," she said tremulously. "It is not for you to speak so despondingly ; all will come right in time."

"In what respect," he asked, with a flush upon his cheek. "No, no," without waiting for an answer, "not what you mean. *That* is a thing past and gone. And don't think, Annette, that I am such an unmanly fool as to make myself out a victim, because of that one disappointment. If one trusts what books say, most people suffer that, few find love where they most wish for it. Why should I be luckier than the rest of the world. It is not that. But to be sure, how the world is changed since this time last year."

He put his hand on his stick and leant his head upon it, in a profound reverie. Annette's presence was bringing out, as usual, all his thoughts and cares, and forgetful of present circumstances, he was yielding to the relief of pouring them out.

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She did not disturb him by inquiries, but lay with her earnest eyes fixed in sympathy upon him.

"They say 'everything is for good,' Annette," he said at last, "'and all trials are to do good.' If I never had fully believed this before, I should believe it now, for I see it in myself. Old Dawson told me once, when I was a boy, that I was 'awful proud,' and so I was, and am. To be sure, Annette, how proud I have been." And he fell anew into a reverie.

"The fact is, Annette," he began again, "I believe I thought I could not do wrong. Everything I did always prospered. All I wished for came. In my presumption, I believe I thought a peculiar blessing of God rested upon me for my good works and wishes. I thought myself, in my way, a kind of apostle. I have seen pretty well now, that that was a fallacy. I shall not forget last winter in a

hurry. Not that last winter brought me any good knowledge. I thought I was all right and they were all wrong; but now I begin to see that I am not so perfect a paragon of wisdom as I thought I was. Oh! Annette, it is a bitter thing to find oneself out to be nothing but worthless dust after all. Not a bit wiser, not a bit stronger, not a bit better, than the commonest labourer about me. They do what they wish when temptation comes, and so do I. I am almost ashamed to say a word to any one now. I feel as if they could read my heart, they could say, 'mind yourself,'—and they would be right."

"No they would not!" Annette cried, the words bursting from her with vehemence; "they would rather feel *what* must that heart be, which for one weakness can be so weighed down with self-reproach."

"One weakness, my dear Annette, how very much you mistake. I mean that my whole

life has been nothing whatever but sham goodness. 'Don't you know how one low motive poisons everything. If you had never done any one thing in your whole life to please God, should you not be terrified at yourself?'"

"Yes, yes," she said, with trembling eyelids, and a rush of colour to her face.

"That's my case, not one thing can I find that I did not do to please myself, and because I thought it the place of myself to do it. Not one—not one," and he struck his stick against the ground. "So there's a wasted life. That's what I call a life of sham, and oh! Annette, it has been a bitter thing to find it out."

"It must," she said, with a fullness of sympathy that almost startled him; "but it is a blessing to be allowed to find it out while there is time. The past is past, but you have a future before you."

"Yes," he replied, musingly, "you are

right, and a hard future too. I have been proud in my prosperity, I must try not to be proud in adversity. One is as hard as the other."

"Adversity," Annette said, anxiously, "why adversity? will not your life be happy again? You must not let one cloud hide all the sunshine;—you have still the same power to do good. That made you happy once, will it not again?"

"Perhaps, some day, my pleasure is gone just now; but that is a fault, not a trouble; but, Annette, I spoke very true words when I said adversity. If all I fear comes to pass, I have a very hard future before me." He paused and looked into her eyes, fixed upon him, large and dilated as with the approach of death. "I had not meant to torment you with my troubles to-day," he resumed, "but, dear Annette, if what you say of yourself is true, I must tell you while I can, and have



your comfort while I can, and good and holy lessons from you to support me. What do you think, Annette, of being blind? Is not *that* adversity?"

"Blind!" she cried, almost with a shriek.

"Now, Annette, be still, or I cannot talk to you, you must not agitate yourself, and there is no need. I can face the thought, and so must you."

"I will be still," she said, with trembling eagerness, "but tell me."

"I only knew my danger for certain two days ago, but I had fears before. All this summer I have had smarting pains in my eyes. At one time they were very bad, but there were reasons for that. I don't mind telling you, Annette, what a fool I was in my first disappointment. I cried with bitter tears, and then I went out into the wind and storm like a madman; and my eyes smarted dreadfully then, but I thought it natural. Of late

they have been growing worse, not only smarting, but misty and dim ; and one day as things come out of forgotten places into one's head, I remembered that a foreign doctor who attended me years ago for a cold in my eyes, told me in pretty strong terms to take care, or I should be '*un aveugle*.' I thought him a fool, as I did most men, and took no care at all ; and if I had it would have been in vain. If I am doomed to it it must come. So I went the other day to a famous surgeon to know my fate, and he told it me ; I begged him to speak plain, and he did speak plain. He said, God might save me yet ; but the danger was great. I knew well there was no hope when he said that." He paused and put his hand over his eyes, as if the coming shadow of the future was already falling over him.

Annette said not a word ; but out of her heart arose a cry of bitter anguish, which almost tore the cords of her life assunder.

Into the future her sad eyes looked, and saw him helpless, and saw a place beside him that might have been hers, but could not. For life, for life a prayer went up that showed how strong was the chain that bound her still, how mighty, still, the force of her idolatry. When he looked up, he saw her weeping—such convulsive tears as are shed by a breaking heart.

“Now, Annette, my dear Annette,” he said, tenderly, “this is not right. I cannot tell you my troubles if you feel them so deeply. Do not fear, I shall bear it well. I don’t say this proudly, God knows; in myself I shrink, as you may guess, from the stroke. But I do believe that no affliction is given without the strength to suffer; and so when it comes, I trust God will help me to bear it. Come, Annette, thank you for your tears. It has been a comfort to me to tell you all. I have told no one else, for I don’t wish to be pitied

before the time; that will be the hardest thing of all ; don't make me sorry I spoke out to you."

She forced her feelings back and smiled, but it was a smile with death in it.

Lord Singleton looked thoughtfully at her, and then rose up from his seat. "I hope I have not done you any harm, Annette?" he asked.

"Only in one way," she said, speaking calmly, but with the same dying smile, "it makes me wish too much to live and help you."

"Dear Annette, thank you ; perhaps you will. If not" . . . . he stopped and sighed, and said no more. "I must go now," he began again, "or I shall not be trusted to come any more. I am afraid I have been selfish in my talk, but it is your kindness makes me so. Good-bye now, and God bless you. You must promise to let me come again."

He approached her couch, and took hold of

the hand she stretched out to him ; and struck once again, by the deathly look in her face ; with sudden, and almost unconscious impulse, he stooped and kissed her.

The rush of blood, quick and crimson, to her face, arrested his attention, and awoke his penitence ; yet it was half laughing that he said, " I beg your pardon, Annette, I forgot myself, quite. What would Mrs. Beauchamp say ? But dear Annette," he added, sadly and gravely, " if all that we have been saying is true, surely these proprieties are matters of little moment now."

Annette tried to smile, but could not ; tried to speak, but could not. When he looked again, the glow of colour had been succeeded by a still more deadly paleness ; but no suspicion crossed his mind. Fearing only that he had tired her, he wished her again " Good-bye," and hastened away.

That night Annette broke another blood-

vessel, and for some hours she was in imminent danger. But the danger past by, and though, after this attack, the physicians no longer spoke sanguinely and confidently of recovery, yet once again hope re-entered the hearts of her parents.

## CHAPTER VII.

“—————So, get thee from me ;  
I am a poor fallen man, unworthy now  
To be thy lord and master ”

KING HENRY VIII.

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WHEN Lord Singleton came out of Annette's room, he found Zoé sitting outside. She looked up wistfully in his face, as if the state of her sister perplexed her—and as if, from a stranger's report, she hoped to find relief from the vague terrors that assailed her.

“You have been crying,” she said at once, in a fearful tone, fixing her eyes upon him with the intentness of a child.

There was something like a tear in his kind eyes, but he smiled at the little girl, and said, "I was sorry to find Annette so ill ; but I hope she will soon be better. Willis thinks she will."

"It is so sad without her. I am quite tired of hoping. When will she be well?"

"She must get a little stronger first. Tell me, Zoé, do you miss Miss Moore much?"

"Very much indeed ; I have never been happy since she went," said the little girl, plaintively. "It was very unkind of her to go. It is so dull now ; but I should not mind that, if Annette was well."

"Should you like her to come back? Would Annette?—would your mother? I think it would do Annette good, but I want to know what you think."

"I know everybody would like it ; I heard papa say so ; he says it very often. But, Lord Singleton," and she looked up in his



face, "I don't think she will come, if you tell her."

He coloured even at the childish gaze, but laughed and said—"We will see. I will *ask* her to come ; will that do better?"

Without waiting to hear more, he patted her head and went down stairs. Mr. Beauchamp was at home, and, after satisfying as kindly as he could, with truth, their anxious enquiries as to his opinion of Annette's looks, he asked Mr. Beauchamp to walk home with him.

"I have been thinking, Mr. Beauchamp," he began, quickly, "that Miss Moore's company would be the best amusement Annette could have. Willis talks much of amusement, but quiet amusement is difficult to find. Miss Moore would be a great help, I should fancy."

"So I feel, my dear lord—so I have felt all along ; but Annette would not allow us to ask her to come back on that account ; in-

deed, she begged us to make as light of her illness as we could. Since Miss Moore thought it right to go, she could hardly leave her friends so soon again."

"I think she would. My belief is, Mr. Beauchamp," Lord Singleton added, after a moment, "that I drove her away; and, therefore, I have made up my mind to give up my guardianship. I have offended her in many points, in some very justly; and, therefore, the sooner it is done the better. Perhaps, it ought to have been done long ago."

"Indeed, my dear lord," said Mr. Beauchamp, "as I told you at first, it was for you what in common speech we call a 'ticklish office;' but you have acquitted yourself of it in a way that . . . . ."

"Say no more about that, Mr. Beauchamp. I have *not* acquitted myself well, and the only reparation I can now make is, to put myself and my own wishes out of the question. Will

you be her guardian? I am certain I could not do any act more pleasing to her than by appointing you."

"I am at all times in your hands, my dear lord. Do with me just what you please. I am very sincerely, I might say affectionately, attached to Miss Moore, and I will do all in my power to promote her happiness, should you make your powers over to me; you may depend upon that."

"You have no objections to make?"

"None whatever."

"Then, it is settled. You, in return, may depend upon me in every matter that may require assistance. We will talk over the necessary arrangements of her affairs in future. If you are agreeable, I will write to her to-night, and I am confident, this being settled, she will come."

Mr. Beauchamp said, heartily—"It will certainly be very gratifying to me, and so it

will to my wife, to have her with us just now. Mrs. Beauchamp has no time to attend to Zoé, and is often at a loss how to amuse poor Annette. We shall be rejoiced, indeed, to have Miss Moore's assistance."

"You shall have it, I trust, very shortly."

Here they parted, and Lord Singleton hastened homewards to write before the post went out. He made no delay, but sat down and wrote—

"DEAR MISS MOORE,—

"My purpose in writing is to let you know what I think has been partly concealed from you—the very precarious state of Annette's health. She does not improve; on the contrary, she gets gradually weaker; and though Willis assures me there is no disease, I am sure he feels her state to be an anxious one. He speaks much of the benefits of amusement and change, but that is a difficult matter to manage her here, as you can imagine. Having

said so much, I am sure your kindness will prompt you to return ; and it is in the hope of persuading you to this, that I have taken on myself to write to you. I am certain your society would be of the greatest benefit to Annette, and that it is much desired by all. In order that nothing may stand in the way of what, for their sakes, I so much wish, I have this day resigned my duties as your guardian into Mr. Beauchamp's hands. He accepts them willingly, and you know him too well for it to need my saying, how certain you will be of care and affection from him. I believe I ought to have done this before. You must forgive me for any trouble and annoyance that I may have caused you by my delay.

“ A niece of my housekeeper's goes to London to-morrow morning. Her direction I enclose. She will be ready to meet you at your nearest railway station at any moment in the course of the next fortnight in which

you may feel disposed to return. Will you be so good as to communicate with her on the subject? With my best wishes for your future welfare and happiness,

“ I remain,

“ Faithfully yours,

“ SINGLETON.”

“ There,” he exclaimed, pushing the letter from before him, and leaning his face in his hands; “ it is done, and there is the end of many vain hopes and vain dreams—and there is the fall of as proud a fool as ever walked this earth.”

The calm and dispassionate tone of this letter was as unfaithful a picture of his heart as well could be imagined. The effort to do this deed had been almost like a plucking out of the right eye. Since the days of his boyhood, the idea of this guardianship had haunted him, had been the source of some of his proudest thoughts, and of late had been prized

and cherished as the peculiar treasure of his heart. To do her good, in mind and body, in fortune and estate, this had been his dream by day and thought by night—and this was the end of it. Forced to give her up, because he had shown himself unfit for the charge—because he had no control over his passions—because he fretted her into madness, and destroyed the goodness that was in her. The resignation was needful—but the more bitter, because he owned it was so.

On other parts of the subject he would not dwell; that he was separating himself from her, blotting himself out from her thoughts; but though undwelt upon they saddened his mind.

“God knows,” he murmured, as he sealed his letter, “my future life looks dreary enough,” and a moment afterwards as he tossed it from him—“poor Annette,” as if for the first time some dim consciousness of her

devotion—some dim perception of the value of her sympathy—forced itself, now that it was ebbing from him on his fancy.



## CHAPTER VIII.

—————The Past will always win  
A glory from its being far,  
And orb into the perfect star—  
We saw not when we moved therein."

TENNYSON.

SYBIL domesticated with the Berkeleys, found herself a stranger in a strange land. Three years makes many changes. Three years of unrestrained yielding to vanity and the love of excitement, makes the mind and manners more unrestrained, and common restraints more obnoxious and less practised; while less time given up to the exclusive contemplation of goodness and virtue makes the

eyes very quick to feel evil. The sight of the straight teaches what is crooked. Without being able to fix on any definite thing, Sybil felt oppressed by the atmosphere of her new abode, and her heart yearned with intense longing to the home she had left. When she heard of Annette's illness—though informed of it in very softened terms—she would have seized that excuse to hasten back at once, had not another feeling withheld her. She alone read Annette's mind, she alone penetrated the cause of her illness, and she felt her absence to be all she could offer of hope or consolation to her suffering companion. This knowledge had been a sudden discovery. If in the early days of her acquaintance with Annette, she had fancied that so it must be, the constant sight of her and Lord Singleton together, and their free and familiar terms had effaced it from her mind. It was a sudden, and—she could not tell why—an unwelcome discovery.

She said in her heart—"After my hardness he will be soothed by Annette's love, and he will love her at last." The thought did not make her very happy, did not make her content to be with the Berkeleys; it seemed on the contrary, to create a restless desire to be with the Beauchamps again, and on the watch; but this was not yielded to. She withdrew herself.

Two things in her present life, above all others, troubled Sybil's mind. One was her powerlessness to withstand or separate from the ways against which her inner sense of right recoiled. All was so light and gay and pleasant, the evil was so intangible that it was like beating the air to fight with it. Self-willed and resolute as she was, she yet felt as if she tamely floated down the stream of reckless thoughtlessness. A second cause of trouble was the change in her tone of mind; she no longer felt in herself that spirit of

enjoyment and high-heartedness she had felt in her former visit. She was treated with lavish kindness, and yet she made no return of affection, contributed nothing, so she felt at least, in the way of pleasure, to those who endeavoured to gratify her.

In both fears she was, however, mistaken. She was beautiful enough, and eager enough to create interest of no common kind ; and the softening of manner, which what she fancied was depression gave her, added to her charms the one she had hitherto wanted. She was the object of attentions and admirations, which might easily have turned her head—but did not. She cared little for them. She longed to be at home.

In her other fear she was equally wrong. The earnest minded leave their own image even upon the most impassive atmosphere.

“Do you know what Mr. Vivian says,” said Honoria Berkeley to Sybil, when she one day

paid her a visit in her room. "He says you 'remind him of a breath of fresh air in a hot house.'"

"I don't wonder," Sybil replied smiling, "you all lead such a lazy, in-doors, artificial life. I rather think I feel like the fresh air myself."

"That is not what he meant," said Honoria, "I know what he meant. I feel it myself—you are not like us. You are too good for us."

"I think I know, too, what you mean," Sybil said thoughtfully, "I do feel different. The fact is, I have been living all this time with good people—people who think very seriously of this life and the next, and if I would, I could not shake the impression off. You do shock me here, at times, I must confess."

"Are not very good people a great bore?" Honoria asked.

"Sometimes, I suppose," Sybil said, laughing, "very much like bad ones in that way. No class that I ever found are free from the infirmities of human nature. But whether clever or not, they are good, nevertheless, and that I like. It gives one trust."

"I sometimes wish I could see good people," Honoria observed, with a momentary touch of sadness in her voice. "When I read of them—I admire them; but they never come in my way, or if they do they are a horrid bore, like the clergyman here. The Beauchamps led a terribly quiet life, didn't they Sybil?"

"Yes, I suppose you would have called it so; but I did not mind it."

"I think," said Honoria, "I would rather be bad, than lead a quiet life; that is, if I did lead a quiet life, I know I should be awfully bad. I suppose you had something to keep you up. I rather suspect you were in love

all the while. Were you in love with Mr. Beauchamp?"

"No, indeed," said Sybil, indignantly.

"Then with Lord Singleton."

"No, indeed!"

"Your 'No, indeed,' is very different with Lord Singleton," said Honoria, laughing. "I don't think you hate Lord Singleton, Sybil."

"I have no reason to hate him," she said, colouring, "I like and admire his character."

"Mr. Beauchamp made us all laugh very much about Lord Singleton. We asked him to describe him, and he said if we could fancy a *man* Lady Bountiful, that was his picture."

"I would ask no better thing than to be laughed at by Mr. Beauchamp," Sybil said, with indignant warmth. "He is utterly incapable of appreciating what is good and noble."

"And is Lord Singleton good and noble?"

"I may not agree with Lord Singleton," Sybil said, after a moment's thought, "but

that does not make me blind to his merits. I think he is good and noble."

"Then if I were you, I *should* agree with him," Honoria remarked. "I think if I saw what was both good and noble, I should love it,—as I do you, Sybil."

The question returned once and again upon Sybil's mind. If she so truly owned Lord Singleton's merits, why did she not agree with him? Why had she made it her business and pleasure to oppose him? Sometimes her answer satisfied her: because it was right for her to oppose his unjust assumption of authority. At other times it seemed that her opposition had been factious and foolish, supporting but little that dignity she desired to assert. She almost wished it could all begin again.

More than once, Sybil found herself standing forth in defence of her guardian.

One morning a lounging, idle party were



assembled in Mrs. Berkeley's drawing-room, enjoying that kind of conversation, when—

“ At every breath a reputation dies ”

Sybil was not present, and in the course of time, her character and circumstances came under discussion, and much amusement was derived from the consideration of her position with her young guardian. The question arose, what feelings had he excited in her breast? and as no certain and definite answer could be returned, a plot was laid to ascertain the point. A clever, scoffing, sarcastic gentleman, whose years gave him, as he said, the privilege to be impertinent to young ladies, undertook to laugh at Lord Singleton in such terms as could not fail to rouse the feelings of any person interested in his affairs or character.

Mrs. Berkeley, careless and heedless, loving plots and pleasures, and whatever gave amusement to a passing hour, consented without hesitation; and the experiment was made in

the presence of a large, though select company, on the evening of the day.

The scoffing was cleverly and judiciously conducted ; the sarcasm so blended with approbation, that for a time it was difficult to say on which side the balance lay.

Sybil felt irritated and annoyed at the tone of the conversation ; but remained impenetrably grave and silent, until the disinterestedness of Lord Singleton's benevolence was called in question ; assailed by those slight, careless shots and suggestions of motives, against which no virtue is proof. With a glowing cheek and indignant words, she burst forth at last, and once aroused, made a defence as convincing from its spirit, as it was free and fearless in its tone.

Mrs. Berkeley felt doubtful as to the opinion to be formed, from her animated manner ; but not so the gentleman who had led the attack.

“ If I have made any charge against Lord

Singleton," he mildly said—"of which, I must say, I was unconscious—I withdraw it. When a young lady stands up in a young gentleman's defence, it becomes us, of course, to bow ;" and he did bow with a most provoking smile.

Sybil said no more ; but her rising colour and haughty air betrayed no common annoyance and displeasure.

Mrs. Berkeley kindly patted her shoulder and said—"Never mind, my love ; we like you all the better for standing up for your friends."

"And the best friend's defence," said the same gentleman, with a malicious smile, "is the warmth of feeling that he has been happy enough to excite in a young lady's breast."

"No feeling," Sybil said, proudly and indignantly, "but sincere respect."

"I had yet to learn the powers of *respect*," he continued, in the same tone of arch banter. "I shall henceforward doubly respect

*respect*, since I find it can call such a colour to the cheek, and such light to the eyes."

Though bursting with anger at his freedom, Sybil refrained from further altercation; and, in her presence, at least, the subject dropped.

To stand up for the wrongfully accused is so natural to a generous spirit, that her warm defence of Lord Singleton excited no surprise in Sybil's mind. She would have done the same at any time of their acquaintance; but the very fact of defending him sent her thoughts more kindly towards him, and again she wished a wish that all was to begin again. But such wishes are commonly too late.

After remaining ten days or a fortnight at Berkeley Priory, Sybil, with the Berkeleys, set forth on their travels. The scenery of the lakes enchanted her; the novelty excited, and the attentions paid her in the resting-places of the journey, might have dazzled her imagination and won her heart, but for the

desire that possessed her to be with the Beauchamps again. Thus it was that she passed safely through the ordeal which Lord Singleton had dreaded for her. The love of good, the taste for better things, was a great shield and safeguard; but none may presume on this;—so sweet is praise and admiration, so fascinating is excitement and amusement, and so vulnerable was the vainer and lighter part of Sybil's nature, that she might have been carried away—that her fancy might have been caught by some object, inferior in character and principles to what her better thoughts required, had she not been guarded by this same restless longing to be at home. The mind makes its own place, and, when another place is perpetually haunting the mental eyes, present enjoyment cannot be complete. When apparently most excited with the scenes that charmed, the conversations that amused, the attentions that flattered her, Sybil, to her

great surprise, would suddenly find her thoughts far from the present, speculating on the probable future of Annette and Lord Singleton.

It was in this state of mind that Lord Singleton's letter found her. On its first perusal she scarcely observed the conclusion. The idea of danger in Annette's illness had never suggested itself; her early life, unbound by any chain of strong affection, had left her mind comparatively free from the fears and terrors, which are the taxes love pays for love. The thought of death and danger fell with a cold chill upon her heart, amidst the light laughing voices of pleasure that surrounded her. Until her immediate departure was a settled thing—until she had silenced the uproar of voices which almost compelled her to remain—until the impression of the first shock of fear had faded and left her mind free for new impressions—until, in short, she was

at liberty to think, she scarcely realized the announcement which her letter contained.

The first excitement over, she read it a second time, then pushed it from her and leaned her head on her hands. A sense of deep depression stole over her mind. All things in life suddenly became dull and colourless. This was a moment for which she had often longed. There had been times when she had panted with feverish impatience for the day that was to free her from Lord Singleton's authority, and it was now come. Like many gratified longings, it brought no joy with it.

Again she seized and re-perused the letter, for an answer was necessary. She almost felt she must be dreaming. Never since they had been spoken had his passionate words—"Oh! Sybil, Sybil, if you could tell the love, admiration, adoration I feel for you," ceased to ring upon her ears; but what echo of their sound was to be discovered here. She must

have been dreaming then or now, or if such words had ever been, they were like an old song never to be sung again.

She took up her pen to answer him, but yet once again, with intense longing, devoured the letter, hoping to discover in the grave, business-like words, some hidden feelings of regret. On this fourth perusal she paused over the passage—"I believe I ought to have done this before. You must forgive me for the annoyance I may have caused you." Either the words themselves spoke of a wounded heart, or else her excited mind imbued them with feeling. For an instant they melted her to penitence. She hastily began to write, intending to express her regret for all the pain she had given him, and even to entreat him to resume the guardianship he had resigned; but before the words were written, again the spirit of the moment changed, she looked again at the sentence that had touched her, and its



feeling was gone ; its tone of regret had evaporated ; it lay before her as cold and calm as the remainder of the passionless epistle.

“ I am thankful I see it,” she said, bitterly, “ I will not force myself and my concerns upon his precious time. If he is indifferent, so I am sure am I,” and she resumed her pen and began anew to write. A tear, large and sudden, fell upon her page and startled her.

She tossed it aside, took up another in displeasure and surprise, and wrote a stately answer.

“ DEAR LORD SINGLETON,

“ I am much obliged to you for writing to me about Annette’s illness. There shall be no delay, and I shall be ready to return to the Cottage as soon as the person you mention can meet me. I have written to her by this day’s post.

“ Thank you for the arrangements you have

decided upon for my future life. I am perfectly satisfied with the choice you have made.

“ I cannot conclude without assuring you that I shall always be grateful for the trouble you have taken for me,

“ I remain,

“ Yours sincerely,

“ SYBIL MOORE.”

Edinburgh, Sept. 15th.

When her heartless letter was gone, Sybil would have given, as she felt at least, life itself to recal it ; on the dissolution of such a tie, even the coldest and proudest might have expressed something of kindness or regret.

But the *Post* is inexorable as Time and Fate. What is in its hands cannot be recalled. Her letter was gone, and vain was repentance now.

If the coldness of the letter grated on her own feelings, much more it fell dead and

depressing on the heart of Lord Singleton. He had not expected much ; but expectation itself rouses the mind into a mood on which coldness falls doubly cold. He had not expected much, but this chilling acceptance of what had caused him so many struggles to offer, was as bitter as the serpent's tooth of ingratitude. He put the letter away among the other papers relating to Miss Moore with a sigh that came from his heart of hearts. He had failed in attaching, by even the common tie of friendship, the one to whom he had given a very life of thought and care, and the failure humbled him to the dust. "That is over for ever," he repeated twice—the first time in bitter sadness, the second time in manly resolution ; and he roused himself to act accordingly.

## CHAPTER IX.

"They seemed to those who saw them meet,  
The casual friends of every day ;  
*Her smile was undisturbed and sweet,*  
*His courtesy was free and gay."*

R. M. MILNES.

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LORD SINGLETON was as determined to conquer his passion for Sybil as to do any other duty that appeared to lie before him. Being now thoroughly convinced that he had failed to elicit a spark of affection in her, he thought no more, hoped no more, from any future effort. He gave it up, and was determined to act on his conviction, with all his heart.

“It becomes man to be content,” he argued, “and if a blessing is denied him, he must not spend his days in useless and unmanly regrets.”

And such being his view of his duty, with his accustomed vigour he determined to pursue it.

Perhaps his circumstances, added to the strength of his resolution, in the present case; one who had been rejected in the vigour and freshness of life, would scarcely dare to offer himself again, when the hand of God had marked him for helplessness and pain; and by Lord Singleton, proud even in his humility, this diffidence was felt with double force. The very consciousness how greatly he might need affection, sympathy, and help, made him shrink from seeking it where it had been denied before. He could not even wish to gain from pity what had been denied to himself.

The disease in his eyes was making steady progress—steady but slow. He followed the

few rules given him by the physician he had consulted ; but as it was not yet time for any vigorous measures to be taken, he preferred to keep his knowledge of his fate to himself. A few days before Sybil's return, he had been forced, by the pain the light gave him, to take to a green shade ; and Mr. Willis, who for some time had been uneasily watching him, very earnestly implored to be allowed to examine into the condition of his eyes ; but was resolutely repulsed by the young lord.

" You will repent, my lord," said Mr. Willis ; " I see something very much amiss in the state of your sight. I tell you so, and I know I am right when I say it. You will repent."

" I know there is something amiss and I am taking good care," was all the answer he could get, and Lord Singleton pursued his own course.

The announcement of Sybil's return was

most joyfully received at the Cottage. Her letter to Mr. Beauchamp was in a very different tone from that to Lord Singleton. Her anxiety for Annette, her desire to be with them, her gratitude to him for so gladly accepting her guardianship, were all spoken with a warmth of feeling, which showed how full a return she made for the kindness she had received. Gratitude is always pleasant and winning, and when it comes from those who are themselves strong in power to please and charm, it is one of the greatest of attractions. Sybil's return was expected like the return of a beloved child.

As a proof of how much his kindness in bringing her back had been appreciated, the letter was shown to Lord Singleton. Its contrast to his own affected him with a new pain; but the involuntary sigh was driven back, and with the more vigorous resolution he determined to cast vain thoughts away from him.

His mind was thoroughly made up as to his behaviour to Sybil. He wished to shew that he bore no ill will ; he wished to shew that he would annoy her no more. He meant to be kind and friendly, and yet by a free and unembarrassed manner, to set her entirely at ease. This combination of manners might be difficult to attain, but Lord Singleton was not one to be overcome by difficulties. He had made up his mind as to what was right, and he was determined to do it.

On the day of her arrival he called to know how Annette was, and hearing that she was better, expressed his intention of riding with the news to meet Sybil at the railway station. The kindness of the thought was like himself, and so also was his resolution to meet her, immediately on her arrival, and 'have done with it.'

When the train began to slacken its speed before it stopped at the station, Sybil looked



out, and the first object she saw on the platform was Lord Singleton—his horses at a distance—himself evidently awaiting her. No Beatrice or Benedict could have been more startled than she was, at the tumult of emotion into which she was thrown by the sight. Her heart beat with a violent joy and gladness, that left her scarcely in her senses to meet him. She had but a moment's time to compose herself, to drive back the rush of blood from her cheeks, and steady her agitated voice, when the train stopped. The moment it did stop, he was at the door to help her out, and his manner then composed her at once. What she had hoped and thought she had then no time to consider; she only knew that while his frank words and unembarrassed manner greeted her, she became as suddenly still, and calm, and joyless, as she had been agitated and happy.

“I know what an anxious thing an arrival is,” he said, quickly, after he had shaken hands

with her ; "one does not know what to hope or expect ; so I came to tell you that Annette is better to-day. It is the third day she has been better, and you will find them all in good spirits."

"Thank you," said Sybil, "it is a great relief." She spoke quietly, but whether it was the relief, or his kindness, or many conflicting feelings, she felt scarcely able to restrain her tears.

He did not see—his shade was down.

"Poor Annette!" he went on earnestly, "sometimes I feel terribly afraid, but this day or two hope has crept in again. You must be prepared for a great change. I was not, when I saw her, and I was so shocked I could hardly get over it. I have not seen her again. They have been afraid to let me."

"Poor Annette!" Sybil said, in a low voice, thinking many thoughts in her heart, but saying little.

"I am sure you will do her good," he added, cheerfully. "We all look to that. It is very kind of you to come."

"I was glad to come. I was glad you wrote," Sybil said; and here they came to a pause.

They were standing together on the platform, while Sybil's attendant and the porters were looking after her luggage, and packing it on the fly that was awaiting her.

There was some delay—a box had been injured, and a rope was wanted. They stood together in silence, and the silence produced awkwardness. Sybil could think of nothing to say, but Lord Singleton, as if feeling embarrassment and determined not to yield to it, suddenly began again in a cheerful tone—

"You have not heard the news, I suppose, Miss Moore—Horner is going to be married." There was something even of an arch and amused look on his lips as he said it.

“Is he, indeed !” Sybil exclaimed, not without surprise. “When was this settled ?”

“Some little time ago, I imagine, for the marriage is to take place immediately. Horner only told me the day before yesterday. Poor Horner ! I wished him an ogress, but I did not wish him, even in my most irritated moments, such a one as he has found. He took me yesterday to see the lady in question, and she baffles description. You must see her to believe human nature could produce such a being.”

“I thought Mr. Horner had good taste,” Sybil began ; but then remembering, stopped and blushed, and added laughing, “What is she like ? I should like to know.”

“As to Horner’s taste, I fancy the poor man has had no more to do with his marriage than I have. He went to pass a few days with the father of this lady, and she, I should suppose, intimated to him her intention to

marry him, and he submits. It must have been a bitter pill at first, but he is becoming proud of her now, and is already a piece of wax in her hands. You ask for a description,—fancy a tall, bony woman, any age between thirty and fifty, and reminding one of a strong useful cart-horse. She wears very short petticoats and strong, thick shoes, with green gaiters. Her feet and her nose are her chief features—both equally large and commanding. “I told you I went to pay her a visit. Horner took me. After the first introduction and a few speeches, we came to a pause, and she broke it by asking me, in her deep hoarse voice, ‘What death I should like to die?’ I said I was afraid I had given very little thought to my own death. On which she said, ‘it was a subject we could not consider too nearly.’ Of course, she was very right; but it was an oddish subject to choose for a wedding visit. I saw poor Horner was on thorns, but I an-

swered mildly, and I believe in the end he admired her powers of instructing. I hear she is very good, and I dare say will be very useful; but I must say I pity the poor man from my heart. A weak man in the hands of such a woman must be a poor creature all his life."

"Yes, I should be afraid so," Sybil agreed. She could not but be amused with his description; but yet the fun and gaiety of his manner affected her she scarcely knew how. In one respect it humbled her. He seemed as if *he* had swept all the past away as much as if it had never been; while round about *her*, its memory was lingering yet.

As he finished his description of the future Mrs. Horner, Sybil's attendant came to say the fly was ready. She and Lord Singleton walked together to the carriage, and before she got in, feeling a return of civility incumbent upon her for his kindness in coming to meet her, she said she hoped he had not received

any injury to his eyes. The feeling that she was resolved to do it—the wish to return his civility—and yet a something of hurt pride, which made her dread to shew her softer feelings—gave coldness and constraint to the question. It recalled the old stately Sybil, who could be kind to all but him.

For the first time he coloured, and his answer was quick and short. “I have not hurt them, thank you ; but they are rather out of sorts just now.”

She got in, and he hastened to his horse, and rode away. By rapid movement, he endeavoured to drive away thoughts and regrets which, with a force he had not anticipated, the mere sight of Sybil had renewed within him. Finding the rapid movement ineffectual, he stopped at Rotherham, and requested the new incumbent—an intelligent and agreeable companion—to come and dine with him.

His vigorous measures were at length successful. At first he listened, with an absent mind, to the plans and wishes of his guest ; but left alone at a later hour of the evening, the young lord's thoughts were no longer of any selfish thing, but entirely occupied in projecting measures that might assist in stemming the tide of vice among the growing and miserable population of Rotherham.

Sybil threw herself back in the fly, and abandoned herself to reflection, thankful for the gathering twilight which left her free from the inspection of speculating eyes. However pride might combat the avowal, common honesty, the feelings of her heart, and the voice of her conscience, all alike testified that Lord Singleton was no longer an object of indifference.



## CHAPTER X.

“ Within, within, my sorrow lives,  
But outwardly no token gives ;  
As in the flint the hidden spark  
Gives outwardly no sign or mark—  
Within, within my sorrow lives.”

FROM CAMOENS.

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THE progress of disease in Annette appeared to be, for a moment, stayed. It had advanced with frightful rapidity, but that very advance had, in its consequences, tended to stay it awhile.

Annette had been lying, for many weeks, in the prospect of death, and that prospect had been unavailing in detaching her mind from earth ; but the *prospect* of death, how-

ever strongly we may think we receive its testimony, is not the *Presence* of death. That came at last, and Annette knew the difference. For a few hours, death—the last severance from mortality—the step which opens the portals of the unseen world—was, or seemed to be, at hand—and before that awful sight, the seen world, with its dearest hopes and most anxious cares, did melt away;—she saw “the littleness of earth and the height of Heaven—the shortness of time, and the length of Eternity.”

That hour, with its strong present convictions, with its fears and hopes, faded away; but the thoughtful and conscientious spirit never turns its steps backward to a former state. The careless receive impressions, in the same degree as the thoughtful, by the events of life, but *they* heedlessly suffer the present to sweep over the memories of the past; but those who know what a solemn thing life is, gather together the fragments of

instruction from every passing mood and day, and store them up as treasures in the garner of their souls. Struggle still there was, in Annette's mind, earthly longings, and humiliation in her own earthliness, but the near presence of the unseen world, had brought her that thing she so greatly needed; Trust in God; the power to submit to His unerring Wisdom and Love, the future lot of him she loved, and her own eternal destiny.

The calm and repose of these holier thoughts acted upon her wasting frame. That agonizing conflict with an idol from which she could not part, was, if not at an end, yet nearly spent. She slept by night, and the night's sleep brought a revived and strengthened spirit by day, a power to receive refreshment and enjoyment from the efforts of those who hung around her couch.

It was during this breathing time in Annette's illness, while hope, sunny and sanguine,

filled all hearts in and about the Cottage, that Sybil came to the knowledge of herself. The calm and respectful kindness with which Lord Singleton behaved to her, contrasted with the intense interest he manifested in Annette's health, pointed her thoughts forward to one sure and certain end. Annette would be Lord Singleton's wife, and the agony this certain conviction cost her, first brought to her knowledge the perfect knowledge of herself.

And this knowledge, what was it? Much like that which came to Julia in the 'Hunch-back'—

"Yes, love. Deceive thyself no longer. False  
To say 'tis pity for his fall—respect—  
'Tis none of these, 'tis love—and if not love,  
Why, then, idolatry."

A love which had taken the deeper root even by the wrath, and pride, and wilfulness with which she had opposed him.

Like Julia, too, she might add—

"I'm wrecked

By mine own act. What, no escape, no hope !  
None."

For all was at an end between them. Her own passionate hand had dashed to the ground, with a force that shattered it, that cup which now, to her awakened sight, she owned to be her only cup of earthly joy. How long it had been so, who could tell ? She could not.

Sometimes, with proud tears flashing in her eyes, she said the love that was so easily daunted, could not have been such love as she would accept ; but this was not the thought of her saner mind. When she recalled the words she had said, she owned that he must have been more or less than man to approach her with like feelings again.

None who heard her cheerful voice, who watched her efforts to raise Annette's spirits, and to vary the entertainments of her sick-room, could have imagined how violent was

the conflict that was taking place within her.

But Sybil was learning, through experience—though scarcely, perhaps, a healthful experience—command over herself and her undisciplined passions. She saw Lord Singleton almost daily ; it was to her that his enquiries regarding Annette were oftenest addressed. She had time to observe how he was changed, how he was softened ; how gentle, how thoughtful, how considerate were his words and ways—time to observe it, to be touched and affected in her innermost heart ; and yet had to maintain the while an undisturbed and tranquil air.

To her, also, were addressed the remarks which the alteration in his demeanour excited in the neighbourhood. It was not in her eyes only that he was changed. Something of the shadow of his coming helplessness had already fallen upon him, and given to his character

that charm which the blending of strength and softness gives. A conviction had of late sprung up anew that Miss Beauchamp was the object of Lord Singleton's attachment, and her illness the cause of his depression. To Sybil, therefore, comments were very freely made. Some spoke of this depression, and bewailed it—some alluded to it as a thing that was passed, or passing, and congratulated themselves on the return of his glad spirits—some, in a low voice, dwelt on their fears of disease, spoke of failing health, and with mysteriously expressed regrets of his eyes, and regretted the loneliness of his way of life. Mrs. Horner, who, in her determination at her first coming into his sphere, to be unswayed by his opinion and authority, was but a picture of what Sybil had been, criticized freely his words and actions; while others, as if to impress the truth already fully felt in Sybil's mind, dwelt even with tearful eyes on his kindness, and generosity, and uprightness of character.

It was not pride, it was but nature, which made Sybil resolve that her change of feeling and intense regret, should for ever remain a secret. None could blame her for that; but there was pride in the degree of indifference she assumed—in the careless freedom with which she entered into these discussions, and the stately reserve she maintained in her daily meetings with Lord Singleton. When, after some of these cold meetings, he was grave, she occasionally fancied that she had given pain—fancied that her power was returning, and then she would bitterly repent the coldness which had repelled him anew; but, when he came again—when she saw his ‘courtesy so free and gay,’ his whole heart apparently given to Annette, she would resent the delusion of a moment—arm herself with a new armour of pride, and repeat the act she was even then repenting.

So they met, and so they parted, day by



day. It was not possible, in circumstances like these, that Sybil should free herself from a passion that was threatening to absorb her.

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From earthly hopes and fears, and earthly struggles, all were suddenly startled by the approach of death. For upwards of a month there had been not only delay in Annette's decline, but a seeming progress, slow, yet hopeful, towards recovery. From no apparent cause, unless, perhaps, a change in the weather, from autumnal mildness to almost winter cold, Annette's cough returned with violence; and, for the third time, a blood-vessel was broken. There was no more to hope. Her last hour was at hand!

The attack happened at the dawn of day; and all day long the danger was imminent; but towards evening she revived, and there appeared to be some possibility of her lingering amongst them a few short days.

When this favourable change took place, Sybil, by earnest entreaties, forced Mrs. Beauchamp, who had hung over her daughter for twelve hours, to lie down to rest, and leave her to her care.

The door was closed—the room silent—Annette slept—and Sybil, brought near to death for the first time in her life, sat wrapt in sad and solemn thoughts;—or, as it has been beautifully expressed—“was closely questioning life, and asking eternal reasons for what was done in time.” To think was not new to her—nor to think religiously—but there *was* something new in the thought that now visited her mind—something more humbling, more calming, more tending to practical good, than had ever been found in her views of life and death, and time and eternity.

She was roused from her reflections by a low voice of inquiry—“Sybil, are you there alone?”

Sybil hastened to Annette's bedside, and bent over her as she replied to the question.

"Death is very near," Annette murmured.

"I must not delay what I have to say."

"Oh! Annette, must you die?" Sybil cried, with passionate earnestness.

The dying girl smiled faintly—a smile that even yet had the tokens of a broken heart—but made no answer to the exclamation.

"I have two things to ask you, Sybil," she began, after an instant's reflection—"I must make them as short as I can. My father and mother—will you, as far as can be, be a daughter to them? Zoé is young; they will want comfort and help."

"If they will have me, I will," Sybil said, earnestly. "Dear Annette, you can ask nothing I will not try to do; but this, because I love them, is an easy task."

Annette stretched out her hand to thank her for the warmth and truth of her words;

then held Sybil's fingers with a grasp that seemed strange from her exhausted frame, and said—"Will you do all I wish?—Will you, for my sake, love Lord Singleton, and be his wife?"

"Oh! Annette, what is it you ask?" Sybil cried, drawing back with a startled air and flushed countenance.

"I ask nothing you should not grant," Annette said, her voice losing its quietness, and betraying—even in death—how she had left father and mother to cleave unto him. "He is worthy of love, and you might—almost I think you do—love him. Oh! Sybil, Sybil! do not let pride stand between his happiness and your own."

Unwilling to refuse, fearful of agitating, yet even by that death-bed resolute to conceal the secret of her soul, Sybil stooped over her, and softly said—"You speak, Annette of a thing that is past and gone. Who can bring back the past?"

“You can Sybil, and when you see him blind and helpless, with none to love and none to comfort him, think of what I say, and have pity upon him and *me*.”

She closed her eyes for an instant, as if to arrest two tears that fell from them—the tokens of the last pang, perhaps, of a heart, that broke in its desire to live for his sake.

*Blind!* the word had never been uttered—Sybil had neither heard it by the ear, nor framed it in her thought—yet it came now with no startling novelty upon her. When the word was said, she knew it was to be, and owned it as an old truth, even in the moment of its utterance. Before that thought, in sight of the tears of her dying companion, the pride of concealment passed from her, and kissing Annette’s pale brow, with solemn and soothing words she said—

“Dear Annette, be at peace. If ever I have the power, I will be, what, if it pleased God to spare you, *you* would be to him.”

“You will have the power,” Annette said with firm assurance; and then and there, by the bed of death, in sight of that breaking heart, Sybil’s own heart bounded with joyful thoughts of love and life.

So strangely, so mercifully is man made, that nothing—no sight of the changes, no conviction of the disappointments, no feeling of the transitoriness of life, can quench—they can scarcely dim—the bright and blessed hope, the unquenching thirst, in each man’s heart of and for happiness.

## CHAPTER XI.

“He who best knows our nature (for He made us what we are) by such afflictions recalls us from our wandering thoughts and idle merriment, from the insolence of youth and prosperity, to serious reflection, to our duty, and to Himself.”

GRAY'S LETTERS.

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ANNETTE died, and was buried. The home that knew her so long knew her no more. There was a time of passionate sorrow that would not, could not be comforted, and then the veil of sacred reverence was drawn over the memory of the departed, and life began again without her.

She died a few hours after her conversation with Sybil—and died in peace.

In the evening time it was light.

She never saw Lord Singleton after the interview that was recorded. First the fear that he had done her harm, then hope that recovery was at hand, had made him acquiesce in the injunctions given, after her last attack by both physicians, to keep her in complete repose ; but though he did not see her, his mind was full of her ; a day never passed without a visit of inquiry, rarely without a message, and commonly a message accompanied by some token of remembrance, which proved his intimate acquaintance with all her minutest tastes and feelings. Sybil's conviction regarding them was an obvious one ; so obvious that had Annette lived, it must, perhaps, inevitably have taken place. Perhaps, in Annette's own secret heart, that thought had made the severest part of the struggle she had so long maintained, and under which she died.

The influence the amiable and unselfish



exert, ungifted although they be with great and dazzling gifts, is very extensive and very subtle. The degree in which they have been prized and cherished is never known till they are missed; then it is found how their sympathy has been the anchor on which many unconsciously were accustomed to rest, in the sea of cares and troubles that this world brings. From Lord Singleton to the peasant child of a few years old, Annette's death was like the eclipsing of the sun; all felt how they needed her; almost felt as if life must stand still until she came again.

Mr. and Mrs. Beauchamp were very touching in their grief. There was nothing in the least degree high or exalted in their characters, and yet they showed some of the very highest qualities in their sorrow. A resignation that seemed incapable of murmuring—a trust that was undisturbed by doubt—and a care each for the other, which made each for the other

with courage, and even with cheerfulness, enter upon the duties of life again. And yet while these duties were thus performed, there were in the eyes of each the unceasing tokens of the tears that were shed in silence, and on the face of each there was a wistful, longing look, as if they were for ever seeking a presence which could not come again.

It was now that the good of Sybil's character developed itself in its full strength; it was now that the kindness she had met with, was returned with earnest gratitude and double zeal. She was like a beneficent spirit in the house, so strong to comfort, so tender to sympathize, so gentle and unobtrusive in her efforts to cheer. Annette's place she made no attempt to take. Annette's place remained unfilled — Annette's special duties remained undone. So it was best. None but a daughter could have dared to occupy the void a daughter's death had made. But she herself

—like a new inmate, a new relationship, a something that was neither friend nor child—found new duties for herself, and opened a new fount of gladness in the deserted home.

In her out-door occupations it was the same. In most of Annette's regular duties, she had been replaced by Mrs. Horner. Mrs. Horner, strong-minded and active, marched about with gigantic strides, and shoes as strong as her mind, and did all a giant could. Had it not been so, however, Sybil would not, for many apparent reasons, have put herself forward to take Annette's place. Much had been done under Lord Singleton's directions and at his request ; all these were either done by Mrs. Horner, or, she who had performed them being gone, were left undone. But Sybil did what she could, nevertheless ; the sick and the sad, the young and the aged, found in her a friend in need, and, from the imperious benevolence of Mrs. Horner, turned

for sympathy to her. A year before, Sybil, with the best will, could not have given sympathy; but the sight and feeling of some of the sorrows of life and death—experience, in short, the world's great teacher—had endowed her with a new sense, and a marvellous perception of the woes of humanity.

“Miss Moore,” observed Mrs. Horner, one day, to Lord Singleton, while conversing on the needs and necessities of the parish, “is useful *in her way*. It is not *my way*, but far be it from me to deny that there may be divers offices in the church.”

Lord Singleton smiled. Her husband coloured. She had married him because she chose to do so, and he was conscientiously endeavouring to be a happy and admiring husband; but taste and conscience were sometimes at war, and, when one endeavoured to approve, the other occasionally revolted. There was something sad in the thought that a good

woman could be as odious as Mrs. Horner was, and still more sad to think of an amiable and refined mind falling, from simple weakness, into society so unnatural and unfit. But such is life.

Lord Singleton was pleased to hear Sybil praised. He had not lost his interest in the improvement of his former ward, but it was no longer with selfish motives. His struggles were beginning to be successful. He admired her none the less, but his efforts to separate himself from her were beginning to bear fruit. He contemplated her as some 'particular star,' which, if not too much above him, was, at any rate, not for him.

His greatest assistance in thus conquering his passion had been no better motive than pride. His sight was failing fast ; and, as the hope, which lingers still around conviction, was day by day giving place to the certainty of ill, so, day by day, his future thoughts turned less and less to Sybil. To Annette he

could have been beholden without shame or humiliation, for those kind offices his helplessness might shortly need; but he felt otherwise with Sybil. He would have given her all—lavished all at her feet; but to give is a very different thing to receiving, and though in one sense we know “It is more blessed to give,” yet in another, it needs higher qualities to receive, even the highest of all, humility. Lord Singleton was still too proud even to frame the wish to obtain from Sybil, that affection his dreary lot so greatly needed. Their paths in life were beginning to separate.

Sybil felt it. The hopes which Annette’s dying assurance had roused, soon were swept away by the sight of her eyes and the feeling of her own sad heart. Remembering the words that had been spoken by Annette’s dying bed, she banished, or she thought she banished, all repelling *hauteur* from her

manner. But this change, if, indeed, change there was, brought no answering change from him. His friendliness and kindness rather increased than diminished, but there was nothing of a lover's ardour in the tranquil attention he paid.

"For violets plucked, the sweetest showers  
Can ne'er make grow again."

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It was almost winter before the disease in Lord Singleton's eyes had made sufficient progress to need constant attention, or to demand professional skill. When the time came, he made up his mind to establish himself in London. Sad anticipations regarding him were very general in the neighbourhood of Beauchamp Park; rich and poor talked with low words and shaking heads of the young lord's affliction; but these were anticipations growing up silently, and indulged privately—for by no word, even to

Mr. Beauchamp, had Lord Singleton ever alluded to his approaching fate, or ever spoken otherwise than cheerfully of what he called his 'wretched bad eyes.' Some people are comforted by pity. To some pity itself is an added trial.

When he left Beauchamp Park, he knew he should never see it again. He saw it now mistily and dreamily, but still he saw it, and as sight ebbed from him, he felt, as the seeing eye forgets to feel, the inestimable blessing of sight. There was no part of his house, domain, or property, that he did not visit alone, and gaze upon as those gaze who are parting from what they cherish for ever. It was all done alone. To Annette he would have spoken of what he felt; but she was dead, and his thoughts had no other resting-place.

The day before his departure, he called at the Cottage.

It was in the morning. Mrs. Beauchamp



was hearing Zoé read. Sybil was in her old place in the window, not drawing but working. Her visits among the poor—and, still more, her restlessness of heart and mind—had made her betake herself to industry; and sometimes remembering old dreams and warmly-expressed opinions, she would scornfully smile as she contemplated her present homely occupations;—but there was no need of scorn. The useful labour of the fingers is often healthful medicine to the mind; a composing draught—a draught she much needed.

When Lord Singleton's tap was heard, she felt why he was come, and armed herself with iron courage to bid him farewell.

He came in and took his seat with his back to the light. As Mrs. Beauchamp sat exactly opposite the window, this position made him almost turn his back to Sybil. As he seated himself, he made his apology. "You must excuse me, Miss Moore,

for I can't help myself. My wretched bad eyes will not stand the light."

This choice of a seat left her undisturbed to work, to think, or to contemplate.

"I am going to London to-morrow, Mrs. Beauchamp. I came to wish you all good-bye."

"We shall much regret your departure," she replied, in her old dry way—for grief, though it makes many an inward change, leaves the manners, for the most part, unaltered. "Shall you be absent for any considerable time?"

"That is what I don't yet know; but I suppose I shall. I shall give myself up, and let them do just as they please. It is no use to do things by halves."

"You are right. May I say, my dear Lord Singleton," Mrs. Beauchamp continued, in a softened and slightly faltering voice, "how much of my best wishes and prayers accompany you."

"Thank you," he replied, quickly and shortly, as if her kind words were painful to

him. After a moment's thought, however, he added, "I am going to do all I can, and all that I am desired, because it may be a consolation in future to think I did; but I know very well, and you know too, that there is no hope."

"There may be. God grant there may," she said with unusual warmth of word.

He shook his head, but made no further comment.

"Have you anything to send, or any commission I can do for you?" he began again, after a short silence.

"I have a small parcel, which, if you would be good enough to deliver, or to have delivered carefully to Garrard, I should be much obliged to you. Shall I give it you now?"

He acquiesced, and she went to a bureau at a little distance.

"Come here, Zoé," said Lord Singleton, after a moment's pause.

The little girl laid down her book, and

obeyed his summons. He placed his arm round her, and then raised up the shade that shaded his eyes, and gazed intently into her face. Zoé was not usually tolerant of liberties, even from him, but she stood now resigned, and still, as if she felt what was in his mind.

Sybil read his desire more plainly, and the tears that had been gathering in her eyes suddenly fell.—She stooped over her work to conceal them.

After gazing thus on Zoé, Lord Singleton, still with his arm round her waist, slowly turned and fixed the same earnest gaze on Sybil. She was not regarding him, and he gazed at his pleasure. Yet the disturbance of that liberty might possibly have pleased him more than its enjoyment, for as he withdrew his eyes after a gaze not long, but intent, he sighed.

The sigh was followed by a moment of abstraction and vacant gazing into the air—and

then he pressed his lips on Zoé's fair fresh cheek, and released her.

He then started up, pulled down his shade, took the packet from Mrs. Beauchamp's hand, shook hands with each—and was gone.

Mrs. Beauchamp left the room, Zoé, with tears in her eyes—touched and sorrowful with she knew not what emotions—went to Sybil to be comforted. As she gazed up into Sybil's face, she saw that she was weeping also, and she sat down, awed and still.

## CHAPTER XII.

“—————’Tis gone, ’tis past—  
Past, and he knows not, and will never know,  
What treasures of the mine were hidden beneath  
The wild flowers and the weeds. For ever gone!  
Methinks that I could weep no less for him  
Than for myself, that he should lose my love—  
It is so great and deep.”

THE VIRGIN WIDOW.

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SIX or seven weeks after Lord Singleton’s departure, Mr. Beauchamp went to London to pay him a visit, to satisfy his own mind regarding his health, and to report to him on the state of his affairs in general.

On his arrival at the Cottage on the day

of his return, Mr. Beauchamp found his wife and Sybil together, and to Mrs. Beauchamp's earnest enquiries he made a cheerful answer. He said Lord Singleton was submitting to all the remedies prescribed, and that all the physicians concurred in opinion that there was still hope.

Mrs. Beauchamp was pleased and satisfied. Sybil felt that there was more to say, and resolved to hear it.

There was no need for her, however, to plan means of extorting Mr. Beauchamp's thoughts from him ; he was ready enough to speak, and in the course of the evening, finding himself with her alone, he rose up from a seeming deep sleep, and waiting for no enquiries, said, with emotion in his voice—

“ My heart was almost broken in London, Sybil, to think of what Lord Singleton was, and to see him now. I say it again, it almost broke my heart ! ”—and he came and stood

before the fire, with his back to Sybil, blowing his nose and poking the fire together.

“ You said there was hope still ? ” she asked, at last, longing to hear all he could tell — yet, with strange restraint, dreading to ask.

“ Yes, yes ; there is what they call hope — enough to keep him there, not enough to inspire one gleam in any anxious mind. I went to see ———, and begged him to tell me, as a friend, what he thought, and all I got was this vague, hopeless hope. He is submitting to some very strong remedies—in fact, doing all that is required—and with a patience and gentleness ! . . . . It is that,” he continued, striking the fire, “ that almost unmans me—to think of what he was, and to see him now. If the physicians admitted more of hope, I should not take it in, because of this patience ; I see in his face that he is doomed to this great affliction—no one could doubt it. Biddulph.



says the same ; Biddulph spoke with tears in his eyes. He says, ' My lord used to be hasty, but he has the temper of an angel now ; ' " and Mr. Beauchamp broke off and resumed his two employments, striking the fire and blowing his nose.

There was a pause ; then Sybil asked, with a quietness that, to her beating heart, sounded icy cold—

" Does he live alone ? Are his days all passed alone ? "

" Yes. There it is again ; it is a desolate lot—not that he is at all forsaken. He has a young man—a very pleasant, nice-mannered young man—to read and write for him ; and Biddulph says he has more visitors than is good for him. The world is a good-natured world, and where there is real trouble, people from whom you would least expect it, show they have hearts. Lowry Beauchamp for one. He is often with him, and exceedingly kind—

as, indeed, in his position, he ought to be. He is touched—so are they all—by his patience. I defy them not to be so; but still all are more or less strangers. Often, when most kind, their presence is most unwelcome. It is a desolate lot.” He paused a moment, then exclaimed, “My poor Annette!”—and, leaning his head against the marble chimney-piece, he burst into tears.

Quickly rebuking himself, however, for this exhibition of emotion, he raised his eyes again, and added, with reverence—“But God’s will be done.”

The course of his thoughts was plain. Annette would have given herself up in devotion to him. And Sybil sat by, with a feeling of strange wonder at the mysteries of life; for, could any have guessed, could any have revealed it, all that Annette would have done, she was there with a living and a willing heart to do. But as a secret buried deep in her heart, that knowledge must live and die.

How little any guessed it, even in her own home, Mr. Beauchamp's next words told. He sat down, with composure, after his burst of emotion, and said—

“You must forgive me, my love, for my want of self-command. I spoke out to you, because I knew I might without fear; and it is a comfort to relieve oneself of sad thoughts. My poor wife is very fond of Lord Singleton, and her nerves have been sadly shaken; and so I make the best of his case to her. While I can with truth say there is hope, I will say so to her; but to you I may give my true opinion that there is none.”

“I am glad you spoke,” Sybil said quietly, to Mr. Beauchamp. “Remember I am always glad to hear.”

To herself she added with bitterness—  
“Yes, to me the worst may be told without fear. To Mrs. Beauchamp such knowledge may give pain, but to me it is *nothing*.”

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The spring was far advanced before Lord Singleton returned to Beauchamp Park. Hope had long faded into certainty, and the last gleam of sight had passed from him, and still he lingered in London. The young lord had always been subject to many human infirmities, and the dread of being pitied was one that clung to him. He had borne his affliction with something better than philosophy—a most Christian resignation and patience—but his philosophy failed him in facing the thought of his return home. In London he could bear the pity his situation excited, but there, where he had been so proud and domineering a lord, there to be a helpless creature was an ill very terrible to his fancy. So he lingered on, tormented with the idea that he ought to return, but without the courage to act upon his conviction.

At length some casual observation, dropped by unconscious lips, on the subject of duty and

cowardice, struck upon his quick conscience and decided him. He made up his mind, and once made, there was no more hesitation. At night he said to Biddulph—"We will go to-morrow," and in the morning he went.

A messenger preceded him by only two hours, but the news flew like wild-fire, and the return of the blind young lord was an ovation. Sharp words, haste of temper, imperiousness of demeanour—all was forgotten—one feeling only of hearty sympathy pervaded all classes, and even the 'thankless democrats,' who had withstood, and would again withstand him, were ready now to join their voices to the chorus of shouting that welcomed his return.

Lord Singleton had been unprepared for such demonstrations of attachment; the remembrance of the winter of the previous year, had left a rankling sting of distrust behind, and these proofs of feeling overcame him.

When, having left his carriage, he stood on the steps of his house and turned his sightless eyes towards the crowd that had followed him, words of gratitude for his welcome, refused to come at his bidding. He waved his hand and moved his lips, and a cry arose which went to his heart of hearts, and the proud young lord answered only with tears. He waved his hand again, and silently entered his abode.

But no medicine could have been more healthful to his troubled spirit than a reception like this. All his former care and interest for his people awoke with new violence; —the spark was there, this lit it into a flame. He felt he had yet life before him; blind as he was, still work to do. This dreaded return was the beginning of a new life, and this first evening of darkness in his home, was an evening of light and gladness in his heart.

The following morning he began his new

life with his accustomed vigour. The young man mentioned by Mr. Beauchamp had accompanied him home as his secretary, and with his help he determined to do all the business he had formerly done. He was already very independent. With that ready intuition which generally accompanies hopeless blindness, he astonished all who surrounded him by his knowledge and skill. "When I saw how handy my lord was," said Biddulph to Mrs. Dawson, "I knew how it would be before the doctors told me. I declare he sees more with them two blind eyes, than I do with my good ones;" and others felt the same; so quick was his sense of hearing, so marvellous his sense of touch, that he appeared to observe and know what the keenest sight passed undiscovered.

His first visit in the morning was to the Cottage. He went accompanied by his secretary; partly because the way was too intricate to trust himself alone without experiment, and partly that the visit might be as matter-of-

fact as possible. His agitation the previous night, however natural, had not pleased him. Being weaker than he was, he had the very common wish to seem more strong. His nerves having been shaken (less by his affliction, than by the strong remedies he had undergone) he was very unwilling to allow that he had nerves at all. This is, under certain circumstances, the pardonable infirmity of proud and sensitive characters.

The winter and spring at the Cottage had passed over drearily. The daily duties of her life, and the new and blessed excitement of being *necessary* to some human beings, had so supported Sybil, that she had scarcely paused to feel how dreary it was; but in looking back, she almost felt as if she had been walking through the valley of death.

The absence of one, and the death of the other—whose companionship had given life and spirit to her former days—had robbed her



existence of its charm ; while the sorrowful circumstances of the family, and the dreary wintry weather, left her undisturbed to her restless longings and as restless despondency. That sickness of the heart which inevitably attends all hopelessness, in which the possibility of hope survives, had fallen over her, casting a shadow, black and dismal, over the visions of her life. While it passed, she walked on steadily ; good and holy thoughts, and thoughts of love and charity, beginning to influence and strengthen her inner being ; but when that dismal winter was gone by, she wondered how she had endured it.

The traces of mental suffering were visible on Sybil's countenance. She was paler and thinner than she had been, and though she had gained in thought and softness, she had lost in brilliancy and animation. But the eyes that might have drawn an inference from this change could discern no more.

There is always a certain degree of nervous-

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ness attending the first meeting with one over whom any great change has passed—be it mental or bodily, a great sorrow or a great joy. There is a fear of showing curiosity—there is a fear of seeming inattention—there is a fear of being voluble, even to a kind of folly—and there is a fear of being speechless. Above all, there is a dread of being touched or affected in a degree painful to the object of attention, or an opposite dread of showing a manner of callous heartlessness. Even when deeper feelings are in question, it by no means follows that these seeming trivial cares are unfelt. The greater the wish to be all that most is desired, the greater the dread of giving even the least pain.

Sybil and Mrs. Beauchamp both nervously awaited the meeting with Lord Singleton, and when he stood before them, their nervous agitation did not abate. He was changed—greatly changed—so much so as to be almost transformed into a new self. Not that there

was any outward cause for so great a change. His eyes retained their size, and almost their colour; but it was like a landscape, from which beauty, sunshine, colouring, all at once had disappeared. Undoubtedly, after a time, new forms of expression would be developed on his countenance, and convey his inner life through his outward features to those who watched and loved him; but now it was a blank, characterized only by one touching expression of patience and resignation. All that eager life and vigour, which had given his features character and beauty, was vanished, dead, and gone.

Prepared for change, they yet were startled by the change—startled and affected—for it was one to melt as well as to sadden.

The first word he spoke, however—a frank cheerful greeting—while it recalled *himself*, gave them also an intimation how he desired to be received, and after an instant's failure, both recovered their powers to meet him

as he wished. Zoé, alone, whose feelings were quick and lively, unable to master her pitying tears, rushed from the room.

The secretary sat down by Sybil; Mrs. Beauchamp conversed with Lord Singleton; and so the visit passed. Once only did he and Sybil exchange words.

As he wished her good-bye, he said, kindly, holding her hand in his, for the single instant that his question occupied—"And how have *you* been all this long winter, Miss Moore?"

His manner was kind, but too kind. It was frank, affectionate, almost brotherly; it froze her.

"Quite well, thank you," she replied, with the chill of disappointment in her words;—and so they met, and so they parted.

So they met, and so they parted, and no meetings were more satisfactory than these. A change came over the spirit of Lord Singleton's intercourse with the Cottage. Annette had always been the ostensible cause of his visits, however much of late Sybil's presence

might have added to his desire to be there. All this was changed. He had no wish to meet Sybil more than kindness and civility required; and though sincere affection for Mrs. Beauchamp, and sympathy with her grief, and many of the small matters which constantly require intercourse, took him often to the Cottage, it was not the daily intercourse of former times. It was rarely, also, that he came alone. Sometimes his secretary, to whom Lord Singleton good-naturedly desired to give all the amusement in his power, accompanied him; and more often he was accompanied by a friend; for many now, whose interest and pity had been strongly excited, came to enliven his seclusion, and cheer the darkness of his days.

Sybil sometimes felt that one conversation, one interview, undisturbed by the intrusion of common interests, unchilled by the presence of spectators, would set her mind at rest at once and for ever. She fancied she could thus

learn whether indeed and in truth he had given up his former wishes, and desired her affection no more. Whether he acted for himself or for her. This desire was at last gratified.

She was accustomed to take long walks; exercise had always an attraction to her lively and excitable nature; and at this time, her mind restless and dissatisfied, sought the relief more than ever. She was returning one morning from a long walk unaccompanied, as was usual, by Zoé, when she saw Lord Singleton also alone and before her. The church was at hand, and to the churchyard gate he was directing his steps.

There he paused and attempted to undo the fastening of the gate. Sybil stopped also. She had never so forcibly realized that he was *blind*, as now, when she was able, unperceived, to stand and observe his movements. She almost felt as if she had no right to take this advantage of his state, and though with a

struggle, had almost decided to pass by, when she perceived that he could not undo the lock.

This put an end to her cogitations, and with a beating heart, she approached him.—At her first movement he knew her and looked round, and there was a slight change of colour as he exclaimed, “Miss Moore !”

“Can I help you?” she said, “I know the fastening is difficult.

“I shall be very much obliged to you,” he replied. “It is not my blindness that makes me so awkward, but a cut I gave my finger last night. I ought to know this lock as well as I know myself.”

Sybil undid it.

He thanked her, and then said in a lower voice, “Mr. Beauchamp told me yesterday, that poor Annette’s monument was put up. I wish to look at it.”

“Yes,” Sybil replied ;—after a moment, with

a constraint she could not shake off, but, with a blush on her cheek, she said, "Shall you find your way, or will you let me show it you?"

"I know it quite well, thank you," he said, with a quickness that seemed to say her help was undesired. "Are you going home?"

"Yes, I have been taking a long walk.—Good-bye."

He shook hands with her, and entered the churchyard. Sybil stood still to watch him. He groped his way safely among the graves and gravestones for a short distance, and she was just turning away, with a sad and hopeless feeling, when he struck his foot with violence against an old gravestone that had almost disappeared in the grass. The pain of the blow was so great, that he winced, and sat down on the green turf of a grave to recover himself.

Whether or no it was right for her to be there, Sybil did not stop to think, but hastened



to him at once. "You had better let me guide you ; I am sure you have hurt yourself," she exclaimed.

"Pride has had a fall," he said, with a smile. "As you are still here, I will accept with gratitude the assistance I rejected. I thought I knew every grave in the church-yard ; but I was mistaken, it seems."

He rose, and held out his arm. She took it, and guided him along.

The monument was just finished ; it was a plain cross of white marble, the shaft of which was six feet high. This stood at the head of the grave ; at the foot was a stone, on which was cut the inscription.

Lord Singleton examined both sides, feeling every part with his hand. He could not quite make out the inscription, and turning to where he supposed her to stand, he begged her to read it to him. It was only this :—

ANNETTE BEAUCHAMP,

AGED 23.

Lord have mercy upon me !

“ Why did they put that ? ” he inquired.  
“ It is not a text I should have chosen for her.”

“ It was done at Annette’s request,” Sybil replied. “ She made it in the letter she left for her mother.”

“ Had Annette any doubt of mercy ? Who may feel safe, if Annette was not safe ? ”

He spoke more to himself than to Sybil, and she did not answer him. He hardly seemed to perceive that she did not speak. He stood over the grave, thoughtful and pondering, as if some new idea had dawned upon his mind.

“ Was not Annette happy in her death ? ” he suddenly began again.

“ She was not unhappy in her death,” was Sybil’s reply, an uneasy feeling stealing over her at his question, “ but I think she was sorry to leave this world.”

“That was strange, was it not?” he asked, and he turned his sightless eyes upon her.

“Was it?” Sybil said, sadly. “I cannot tell. Though good enough to die, she was young to be weary of life.”

“I meant,” he explained, “that I thought women were not tied and bound to this world, as men are.”

Sybil half smiled at his conclusion, but he had already turned his eyes to the grave again; and she did not suppose he would care to argue out the question.

She was right; that was not the thought in his mind. Presently he said, in a low, grave voice, his eyes fixed upon the grave, “Did Annette care for any one?”

She paused before she answered. He raised his eyes and fixed them upon her. “I cannot tell,” she then replied, in a tone that involuntarily was cold.

As if rebuked, he turned his head away.

Quickly reproaching herself for the ungenerous feeling, which withheld the confirmation of what he evidently already knew, she added, "I have sometimes thought so."

He turned again, and moved a step or two towards her, pausing, however, before, with a quivering lip, he asked, "Did she care for *me*."

"I have sometimes thought so," Sybil faintly repeated.

"Blind, blind idiot!" he exclaimed, striking his forehead passionately, and retracing the few steps he had advanced, he leant his head and arm against the cross beam of the marble cross. Thence, through his fingers, Sybil saw large tears falling upon the grave.

She stood by like one turned to stone. Every hope of her own seemed to die and bury itself under the turf before her. If aught she felt, it was jealousy of the inanimate form beneath.

Lord Singleton's indulgence of emotion was but short. Ashamed, perhaps, to let it appear before her. He returned to the place where he had laid his hat on approaching the grave, stooped and picked it up, and then addressed her. "I beg your pardon, Miss Moore," he said, in his usual tone, "I am quite ready now. If you will be so kind as to guide me back to the gate, I will detain you no longer."

He held out his arm, and she led the way in silence. There he shook her hand, thanked her, and went on his way alone.

And so again they met, and again parted.

This opportunity, so long desired, from which so much had been expected, what had it done for her? It had convinced her of his indifference; but did it make her indifferent?

CHAPTER XIII.

“ Now, at the last gasp of Love's latest breath,  
 When his pulse failing Passion speechless lies,  
 When Faith is kneeling at the bed of death,  
 And Innocence is closing up his eyes—  
 Now if thou would'st, when all have given over,  
 From Death to Life thou might'st him yet recover.”

DRAYTON.

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“ Beauchamp Park,


“ August 10th.

“ MY DEAR LOWRY,

“ As I have, unfortunately, a good deal of  
 leisure time for thought, I sometimes think of  
 my faults, or rather, to word it more cor-  
 rectly, sometimes when I am condemned to

reflection, my faults must unwelcomely intrude upon me. Among those faults I have lately been disposed to place my conduct on a certain occasion to you and to Miss Moore. I don't mean to say that I did not intend to do well, but I now think, though the intention was good, that my behaviour was unwarrantable. When you so kindly visited me in London, we did not touch on such personal subjects, but for many reasons I am anxious to speak of them now. Perhaps you know, or perhaps you do not know, that I have ceased to be Miss Moore's guardian. I have, therefore, nothing whatever to say to her or her concerns, except as a friend. But as a friend, I can never cease to be interested about her.

“My purpose in writing to you, is simply this : if you care about her still, it speaks well for your constancy. If she cares, ever did or ever should care about you, it speaks well for *you*, for her mind is a tried and right mind



now, and I should not distrust her choice as once I might have done. Should you therefore be disposed to do so, I beg you to come and pass a few days here, and see what you can do.

“After what I formerly said, I must come now to mercenary matters. I think you told me you were by some hundreds richer than you were. Miss Moore is poorer. She will not have above five hundred pounds a year, but should she be disposed to accept you, I will give her (or to you who will not grudge me that pleasure), fifteen thousand pounds on her marriage. Part of this, as I will explain to you, is almost a debt, the rest is a gift I willingly give, and if I live but a few years, my heir shall not be the poorer for it. If I die soon my heir will have got it.

“I do not think you are likely to be happy as a poor man, but with these arrangements you will be above poverty, and with your talents, if you pleased, you might do some-



thing in the world. I know nothing whatever about yours or Miss Moore's sentiments, but as you are both still unmarried, it sometimes crosses my mind that there may have been deeper feelings engaged than I supposed. If I am altogether mistaken, burn my letter and think of what I say no more. It has eased my mind to write, and that is all that concerns *me*, though at the same time I am most truly anxious for yours and Miss Moore's happiness.

"As I could not let my secretary be the confidant of this letter, you must excuse its being totally illegible. Come here when you like, and as you like. I think I shall be alone this month. Next month, a few people are coming here.

"I am,

"Yours affectionately,

"SINGLETON."

The purport of this letter had been for

some time brooding in Lord Singleton's mind. The doubt which had withheld him, was the old doubt as to Lowry Beauchamp's worthiness, but he thought better of him now than he had done. Lord Singleton was very little disposed to over-estimate human nature in general; but he was very much inclined to over-estimate any who showed kindness to him. He had received much attention and sympathy from his cousin in London, and since then a change of mind regarding him had begun to take place.

It was not till the letter was written, that he was aware of the exquisite pain the plan unfolded in that letter gave him. Not for the pain, however, did he pause to think, until it was sealed, directed, and given to his servant; then, for a time, he sat in sad and bitter meditation. More than once, twice, or thrice before, he had said it was the last time in which he would revolve the inevitable

that frankness and courage were more likely to impress her favourably, than any of the more insinuating ways he sometimes had practised.

One morning, therefore, having accidentally discovered the direction in which she was going to walk, he proceeded to follow her steps. Had Lord Singleton known what that day might bring forth, he would not have gone, as he did, so calmly to attend a distant railway board. He had no idea his cousin had determined on operations, so decisive, and so like his own.

"I thought I should find you in this direction," Lowry Beauchamp said to Sybil, as they met. "Singleton is gone out for the day, and has left me to myself."

The latter part of the speech seemed to explain the first, and, though annoyed at his company, Sybil was too indifferent really to care whether he accompanied her or not.

She made a civil answer, and they went on

together. Before she had thought of any observation to make, he began, suddenly—

“We parted in anger, Miss Moore, two years ago—in anger on your side, at least, as I was very well aware—and, perhaps, a just anger. Have you forgiven me?”

It was very long since Sybil had considered the subject, and she really did not know whether she had forgiven him or not. She only said,

“It is a foolish thing to go back to what is entirely past and gone. Do not let us speak of such things.”

“They may be past and gone to you, but they are not so to me, I have never forgotten them, or you.”

“Mr. Beauchamp,” she replied, colouring, and drawing herself up haughtily, “such speeches are very unwelcome to me. If once I was young and foolish enough to listen to them, I am so no longer.”

“You are not so old,” he said with a smile, “as to make your listening an unpardonable folly. You must listen to me for my own sake. I loved you in those by-gone days; I love you still. I do not speak in folly, but in sober earnest. Nay, listen,” he said, stretching out his hand and interrupting the interruption which he saw her anxious to give. “I came here with Singleton’s leave, nay, at his invitation, to try my fate—otherwise, even although I had not forgotten, I should certainly not have dared to approach you again. Formerly, I knew he did not approve of my feelings; now he does so. I speak with his sanction. Consider the subject. Do not suppose I ask, or hope for an immediate decision. I only ask the permission to try to win you. Now speak.”

He had been intently watching her, and the change of colour, the cloud on her countenance at his words, did not escape him. A

thought flashed through his mind ; but like a thought that is not noticed while another is uppermost.—His own fate was uppermost now.

“ It is a case that needs no thought,” she said, her good judgment, her better feelings struggling with the proud answer she was disposed to give—pride, not against him, but against the prompter of his words. “ Thank you for having thought of me so long ; but it is now and for ever impossible.”

“ You are very decided in your expressions,” he observed, with disappointment and mortification.

“ It is best to be so. I only speak as I feel. Let us never return to this subject again.”

He walked by her side in silence, his countenance far less disturbed, his footsteps far more calm and subdued, than hers. At last he fixed his eyes upon her again, and said,

“ I think your decision will cause Singleton some regret. I think he has thought with

pleasure of having a cousin's right to your interest and society."

A faint tinge of red on her cheek was succeeded by a marble paleness—and this, again, by a deeper glow, as she said, at last,

"I am extremely sorry to disappoint Lord Singleton ; but questions like these are too solemn, and involve too much of happiness, for any such considerations to influence in their decision. Let us speak of it no more."

"We do not, I hope, again part in anger," he said after some moments.

"No, indeed," she replied with kindness and cordiality ; and thankful to be left to herself, she took the hint she thought his words implied, and held out her hand.

He left her in some perturbation of mind ; and the chief part of the day, walked about in uncertainty and reflection. Many people struggle with temptations to the indulgence of a bad feeling or action ; it is less common

to struggle as he was doing—with a good one. He returned home still in uncertainty.

When the young secretary, who had the tact to keep early hours, had left Lord Singleton and his cousin alone that evening, the former observed—"I think you are out of spirits to-night, Lowry. Has anything particular happened to-day?"

"Do you perceive in me any marks of a disappointed lover?" said his cousin, with a slight laugh.

"How do you mean?" cried Lord Singleton, rising up in his chair.

"I am that miserable object," he continued in the same tone. "Miss Moore and I have had an amicable conference to-day, and we part friends. *Friends*—nothing more. She is perfectly decided on that point."

Lord Singleton was sorry for his cousin, but no regret for him, could make his communication otherwise than a relief. Lowry's eyes



were fixed intently on that sightless face which could be perused at pleasure, and he saw it.

“I am sorry,” Lord Singleton said, kindly ;  
“but on such things the least said is the best. If she was decided, you will not care long. It is only uncertainty that maddens one.”

“Very true. I never felt less mad, and am philosopher enough to feel already that it is all for the best. One is worked up at the moment to be captivated by certain ideas ; but the delusion being past, I believe I am far happier as a single gentleman.”

“That I doubt,” said Lord Singleton, with decision.

“You may doubt it, but I don’t. And now let us, if you please, change the subject of our discourse from me to you. Why don’t *you* marry ? Matrimony may be, it is a doubtful point with me, and all men like me—but with your position and your habits, and in your

present state, it is indispensable to happiness."

"It is easy to say to me, 'why don't you marry?'" was Lord Singleton's reply; "but who, do you suppose, would like to be a nurse to a blind man?"

"That is false modesty, my dear Singleton. You have advantages enough to offer, to make the situation of your wife a very desirable one. But, besides this, women are kind souls, almost all of them; and I believe it is a pleasure to them—a natural pleasure—to alleviate afflictions, and cheer life. I have seen a great deal of women, and though I have seen a few naturally selfish, they are but the few. With most women—and not only very good women—a misfortune like yours would be no disadvantage."

"People speak of marriage as if it were a mere state," said Lord Singleton, smiling. "You are not the only person who has urged upon me that a wife is indispensable to

my condition—a *wife*, as if a wife were a thing. I have somewhere seen it said, that ‘marriage is Heaven or hell,’ and though the words are forcible enough, they are not a bit too forcible to express my opinion. Look at that *thing*—a wife—that some people have, and ask yourself if solitude, however burdensome, is not better?”

“People get used to everything,” observed Lowry Beauchamp.

“And that is the very thing I should dread. Conceive a man getting *used* to a woman like Mrs. Horner. How he must have lost all taste and dignity, and niceness of feeling, before he can get *used* to such a woman as his friend and companion. No!”—He continued, starting up, and speaking with his old vehemence.—“There is no prayer I would, in my present circumstances, more fervently pray, than that I may be preserved from the temptation of loving unworthily.”

"Mrs. Horner is not a woman," said his cousin, laughing: "she is a genus by herself, and there is no fear of your falling into clutches like hers. But there may be some, even hereabouts, who might be very worthy of being loved, *even* by your fastidious affections."

"There was one woman," Lord Singleton said, sadly, "who, I think, would have loved me, even as I am, and who, though she might not be my first choice, I could have loved and revered enough to submit to be dependent upon her. She is dead. That was Annette Beauchamp."

"And who was your first choice?"

"Now, Lowry," he said quickly, "you are passing the bounds of discretion. Let us leave this subject."

Lowry Beauchamp had one more struggle to overcome—a good prompting of his conscience; but it was too powerful, it overcame *him*. Compassion is a divine gift to man, which,

disregarded, may possibly wear its quickness and liveliness out, but which, fortunately, is beyond man's power entirely to quench. Compassion for the affliction of his cousin was fast delivering Lowry Beauchamp from his old bad feelings of jealousy and ill-will.

"What did you think of Lydiard, yesterday?" Lord Singleton inquired, by way of leaving the subject—Lydiard being the rector of Rotherham.

"Why should not Miss Moore do?" was his cousin's reply. "*She* is not of the Mrs. Horner genus; and it strikes me as just possible, that even a fastidious man might pass his life happily with her."

"No, no!—not Miss Moore," said Lord Singleton, shortly.

"Do you know, Singleton, that it suggested itself to me, to-day—one of those sudden inspirations one has—that Miss Moore likes you, is in love with you, or whatever is the

discreetest way of wording such a delicate subject."

"No, no!" Lord Singleton said, shaking his head decisively, though the glow on his cheek showed how little he heard him with indifference—"I don't pretend to infallibility, but my eyes are rather acute on such subjects, and when a speaking countenance, like Miss Moore's, is in question, I may say I am certain that they are not mistaken."

"You are mistaken in this case," Lord Singleton said, in the same short way "Depend upon it, you are. Say no more about it."

"Not another word. If men choose to be wilful and obstinate, let them be so—I don't care. Let us change the subject. What do you think of Lydiard?"

"It is not obstinacy, Lowry—I am very much obliged to you. It is ——' He paused and hesitated; then, in his usual frank way, said—"You deserve it of me that I should

“speak out—it cannot be—one ought not to be too proud to own such things—because she has refused me.”

“Indeed!” exclaimed his cousin, in extreme surprise. “She is a singular young lady. When was that?”

“Last year, long before *this* state of things—and not mildly—most decisively.”

“Then, of course, my dear Singleton, my observations are founded on wrong premises. I beg your pardon for having annoyed you on such an unpleasant subject. Let us leave it. Now for that poor man. What do *you* think of Lydiard?”

With a strong effort Lord Singleton banished his excited and troubled thoughts, laughed, and rejoined—

“I think him the one wise and upright man that may be found in a thousand. What was your impression?”

“Wisdom and uprightness do not come

under my observations. I thought him well-informed and agreeable, and though an enthusiast, not an unpleasant one."

"If ever any good is to be done at that wretched Rotherham," Lord Singleton said, with warmth, "he is the man to do. He makes the people all, from the red republicans with their sharp intellects, to the poor, senseless, ragged vagabonds, love him and fear him ; and if good can be done, which in my desponding days I sometimes doubt, he will be the man to win them to good ; not me," he added, in a lower voice, "as once I presumptuously supposed."

"So I should suppose, a *leetle* bit of a Jesuit."

"Not the least in the world. He is a gentleman, and knows when to speak and when to be silent. That is all. Compare him and poor Horner. Not that Horner is not equally good. I will say that for him ; he is a man



without vice in him ; but he is a poor creature, and the older he gets the more poor he is. One of my faults that has no place for repentance, is his appointment here ; unless the Queen is good enough to make him a bishop, and that I really cannot advise her to do, here he is for life, and we must make the best of it. But since I am become a poor creature myself, it is really a serious grievance."

When Lord Singleton went to bed, he lighted a candle, as was his unbroken habit, unbroken by any consciousness that his day and night himself he made, and then came back holding it in his hand, and said to his cousin—

" I appreciate your kindness to-night, Lowry ; I know it must have been an effort, at least I am sure it would have been so, under the same circumstances, to me. If it were not that there was a mistake, you would have done me an inestimable service ;

and that there was a mistake, makes no difference in my sense of what you did."

Lord Singleton very little knew what bad feelings against him had formerly reigned in Lowry Beauchamp's mind, he could therefore only partly guess the effort of which he spoke. Lowry could, and in the very novel feeling of an approving conscience, he found a pleasurable sensation which was strange to him.

"Don't be quite certain that I am mistaken," were his last words. "As I tell you, women are kind souls, and pity may have worked a marvellous change."

"Pity!" Lord Singleton exclaimed, with some heat, wincing at the word. It was not Sybil's pity that he would have been satisfied to win. "No, no," he added, "it is all a mistake," and he walked away with his lighted candle to bed.

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Lord Singleton was perfectly sincere in his

decided negative to the possibility of Sybil's attachment, perfectly sincere in saying inwardly, that if pity was all that had worked a change, he did not even wish to have it; and so having said and decided, he thought he banished the subject from his mind; but impressions are made without the will, and with which the decisions of the judgment have nothing to do. His cousin's words took root in his mind, and no effort could shake them off. Their effect was a restlessness very much in contrast to the tranquil serenity of mind and behaviour, which since his return home had been, as is most common with blind people, stealing over him; a calm, which if somewhat sad, was still a calm. With his newly-awakened restlessness, some outward impatience, hastiness of manner and temper reappeared.

"I suppose I am saying a wrong thing," Mr. Beauchamp observed one day to his wife

and Sybil, "but I assure you it gave me a feeling of real pleasure to hear poor Lord Singleton blow Biddulph up just now, in his old way. Of course his patience and gentleness is most admirable, but it is so unlike him, I could almost wish it away."

Biddulph felt the same on the occasion—"Why my lord's my lord again!" he observed, cheerfully, to Mrs. Dawson, when the sharp rebuke for some carelessness came to an end.

For some weeks this restlessness of mind endured. When in Sybil's presence he strained his ears to catch the intonations of her voice, hoping there to discover a tone of repenting. He longed, till his blind eyes seemed bursting with desire, to observe whether her eyes turned with interest upon him. But this was all he did. A something that was not pride, but partly natural temperament, and partly a desire to build no more barriers between them, withheld him from what is commonly called, 'feeling his way.'

At length, one morning he said to himself—  
“Is it possible that I, as I believe a sensible man, can torment myself thus, when certainty is in my power; am I so poor and mean a creature, that I cannot bow my pride to venture, for what if lost is no greater loss, and if won, is a gain worth all ventures.”

The words were no sooner said than the mist cleared from his eyes, and his resolve was taken.

It happened that the day before this, a request had been made to him, in enforcing which Sybil's name had been used. Taking advantage of this circumstance, he went boldly down to the Cottage.

“Don't disturb yourself, Mrs. Beauchamp,” he said, as he entered, hearing the quick close of Zoé's reading-book; “I come to speak to Miss Moore. Your friend and *protégé*, Esther Shepherd,” he continued, turning quickly towards her with a smile, “came to me yes-

terday to ask me to throw down her house and build it up again, and backed her somewhat unconscionable request—for the house is a good house—with the assurance that if I did so, Miss Moore would be for ever obliged to me.”

Sybil's colour rose, and with impetuous warmth (a sudden rise of temper, which showed how, in spite of trial and thought and principle, the old root, though decayed, was living within), expressed her surprise and displeasure at the freedom taken with her name, and disclaimed any interest in the matter.

Lord Singleton did not notice the burst of indignation, in truth was not to be rebuffed by it, and when she had replied, replied again—“I shall be too happy, as you may well imagine, to do anything that can give you pleasure; and if poor Esther has not lost all interest in your eyes by her misuse of your name, will you walk down to her cottage with

me, and we will see if some satisfaction cannot be given her. It is but a step."

Sybil's pride, though still living, no longer had sole dominion over her. She was ashamed of her warmth, and after an instant's hesitation and embarrassment, consented to accompany him.

In two or three minutes she had taken his arm, and was guiding him along through a copse, which formed a short cut to the cottage in question.

They walked along in silence. Sybil's embarrassment increased. As he did not seem disposed to speak, she felt speak *she* must; and casting her eyes about, framed her lips into this too natural, but with such a companion, inappropriate remark,

"I believe we say it every autumn, but how beautifully the leaves have faded this year."

"Have they?" he replied absently.

The absent tone grieved and shamed her ; to her quick remembrance, it was not absent, but reproachful and sad ; and full of penitent regret, she cried, with unguarded impetuosity,

“ Forgive me ! ”

“ What did I say ? what did *you* say ? ” he asked, startled.

“ Nothing,” she replied, colouring again with shame and anger, at what appeared to be either indifference to what she said, or unconsciousness of her presence.

They walked but a few moments more in silence, then he took courage, and said,

“ Forgive *me*, if I was absent. I was so. I was revolving in my mind a question on which all my happiness depends. It is nearly a year and a half ago, Miss Moore, that I spoke to you of an attachment which I had long silently cherished in my mind. It was on a day I never think of without shame and pain. You rejected me ; and I said then, not



to you only, but to my own heart also, that I would think of you no more ; but I have not kept my word. Sybil, I know what I am doing now—I know what a heart and what a joyless life it is I offer you again. I can hardly tell what it is that prompts me to this act of daring ; for hope I have no grounds to have. But it is done. If you have never repented of what you then said, do not grieve to give me pain by repeating it ;—what has been long borne can be borne still ; but if you ever have repented, or feel in yourself that you could repent,—I have not been too proud, Sybil, to offer you my afflicted life ; do not you be too proud to say that you will give me happiness.”

“ I do repent—I have long repented,” she cried with ardent, ingenuous frankness. Not for one instant would she keep him in fear and pain ; not for one instant would she let her pride put on the false veil of a misplaced modesty.

And here again, "what a single word can do." One, or but a few words, and the night was day, and the darkness was no longer mine, and secrets hid as in the impenetrable depths, came forth to light.

"Let no one ask me how it came to pass.  
It seems that I am happy—thus to me  
A freckled emerald twinkles on the grass,  
A purer sapphire melts into the sea."

## CHAPTER XIV.

“Summer departs,  
The snows of Winter fall,  
Winter glides by,  
Then comes a Spring to all.  
In the morning, Mountains ;  
In the evening, Fountains.”

OLD PROVERB.

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ON the tenth of October, Lord Singleton was married. The weather was mild and sunny, and promised a short continuance of its autumnal beauty. To take advantage of the fast fading days of autumn, the rejoicings for the marriage took place four days afterwards. These were no showy or pompous festivities,

but arose from a simple desire on the part of Lord Singleton, that his people should share in his happiness. Beauchamp Park was thrown open to all who chose to come, and there amusement was provided for the body—substantial comforts for the appetite—and wonders for the eye. The celebrations were to close with fire-works, which in that out-of-the-world district, had never been seen before.

Towards the close of the day, Lord Singleton and Sybil wandered out and mingled with the crowd. With intuitive tact, the people perceived at once, that he was come, like themselves, to enjoy himself, and forebore to greet him with such tumultuous marks of pleasure, as must have shortly driven him away. But though no voices shouted their welcome on his ear, on *him* every eye was fixed—every game was suspended, every conversation broken up as he passed; and as his steps moved along, before and behind him, every

head was uncovered in silent reverence and affection. It was a touching sight, to see him who was the one on that day, from whom happiness flowed ; the one to give honour by his words ; the one on whom every eye in homage was bent ; himself dependent, as the blind must be ; an object as much of compassion as of honour.

In passing a group of the rudest and fiercest democrats of the town of Rotherham, Lord Singleton's greatest opponents, Sybil observed, with surprise, the same mark of attention—namely, the heads, uncovered as he passed, and remaining uncovered while their eyes, unconsciously perhaps, pursued his steps. She remarked upon it to him.

“ It must be for you,” he said.

“ No,” she replied, laughing, “ they stare at me as a wonder, but their attentions are for you.”

“ Perhaps it is as you say,” he said, after a

moment. "Perhaps it is one of the sweet uses of adversity, that it should be so. I do believe that they, and all, would do anything for me now. I must presume upon it, but the more shame it will be, if we do not do all we can for them; or if I, in my own happiness, allow myself to forget theirs."

"That will not be possible," said Sybil, smiling, "at least, if you do, you must change your nature. Long as I have known you—and it seems to me a lifetime—I never knew you to care for any pleasure that was only your own."

"None are safe," he said, gravely. "I don't say it as a truism, but feeling it in my heart; and I less than any. Is that Mrs. Horner?" he asked, an instant afterwards.

"Yes; but a great way off. How did you know?"

"I felt her," he said, laughing. "I have such a dislike to that woman, that she affects

me with a bodily shuddering,—such a dislike that I never can lose an opportunity of being civil to her ; so let us go to her, or them, at once.”

Mr. Horner had been visited with such extreme agitation, after performing the marriage-service for Lord Singleton and Sybil, that his wife had wrung from him a confession of his former admiration of Miss Moore—a secret which, whether rightly or wrongly, he had hitherto locked in the recesses of his bosom. The confession had excited no agreeable feelings in Mrs. Horner’s mind, and she had indulged every day since then—and this day in particular—in many severe and highly sensible remarks on Sybil’s faults ; her frivolity (that is her beauty, and some little vanity) ; and her want of steadiness (that is, her occasional excitements), and deviations from the regular routine of conversation and conduct.

In no sweet mood of mind she prepared to

meet her now ; but her heart, though bony, was vulnerable ; and as Sybil came towards them, so radiantly beautiful, so touchingly happy, guiding along her blind husband, and yet, while she guided, evidently leaning on him in her profound admiration and esteem,—the bony heart melted, and she received her with her best of manners and best of graciousness. This best of manners, chiefly consisted in the frequent and fluent use of Sybil's new name ; for the strong minded woman would have disdained to feel any difficulty or awkwardness in so simple a change.

As Lord Singleton and his bride took leave of Mr. and Mrs. Horner, and wandered on down the park, a voice behind Mr. Horner, said,

“ *What God has joined together—I think, Horner, that will be a happy marriage.*”

It was Mr. Lydiard who spoke.

“ Yes,” Mr. Horner replied, not daring to



express all he felt about it, lest he should express himself too strongly.

"I have every reason to think Lady Singleton is well-disposed," observed Mrs. Horner, "and I have no doubt, *with time*, she will awake to the responsibilities of her station."

"Responsibilities!" said Mr. Lydiard, with a thoughtful sigh, "yes Mrs. Horner, you are right. On a day like this and with a sight like that, one is apt to dream something too wildly of the happiness and beauty of this world—but that word responsibility sets all right again. If they are honoured—the greater the effort to let it be deserved; if they are happy—the greater the need that they who have gathered less should have no lack."

"Where are my little vagabonds?" he exclaimed, an instant afterwards, looking round with a smile. "I promised them a sight of, and, if I could, a word from, the bride and bridegroom; and happy as the day has been,

they have never let me forget it.—Now is my time.”

He moved away, and collected together twelve little boys, formerly little vagabonds from the street at Rotherham, now under his peculiar care and guardianship, growing up into as respectable a class of little beings as could well be seen. He called them to a race, and preceded them down the smooth green sward of the park, until he halted within a short distance of Lord Singleton and Sybil. He then went and made his request; and while the little creatures stared wonderingly on the lovely face of the one, and the sightless eyes of the other, an impression of admiration and compassion was imprinted on their young minds, which never, perhaps, would pass away.

Having provided themselves for such occasions, a shower of small coins were flung into the air, and while the boys laughed, and shouted, and struggled, Lord and Lady Singleton walked on.

At a distance, away from the crowd, silently looking on, stood Mr. and Mrs. Beauchamp, and Zoé.

Sybil observed them; but for a moment doubted whether or not she should notice their presence.—Amid all their sincere rejoicing in her happiness, and Lord Singleton's hopeful prospects, she had not failed to perceive that the traces of silent tears were more frequent than ever. Yet after an instant's thought, she felt that what was kindest, was also best, and since others had been noticed, it would not have been what was kindest to pass them by.

The interview, however, though warm, was short. The traces—and almost more than traces—of tears were there this day, heavy look about the eyes, and tremulous movements around the lips—and after a few words, and a request that Zoé might be allowed to sleep at the Park, for a better enjoyment of the fireworks, again they wandered on.

"I know they suffer to-day," Sybil said to Lord Singleton. "For many, many years such a time as this must have haunted their minds, only with another name joined to yours. It could not have been otherwise."

"I hope," Lord Singleton sadly replied, "that an error of judgment is not visited upon us like an error of intention. If it were so, little indeed of happiness would be mine. I shrink now from the remembrance of the suffering which I, in very thoughtlessness must have caused Poor Annette!"

"Poor Annette!" Sybil as sadly said. "When this life seems to me too, too happy—when, as now, I am disposed to look on it as an enchanted land—then I must turn my eyes to her grave, and remember her blighted happiness. Why—oh! why am I so unspeakably blest, while she —so far more worthy of it—was denied a blessing? May God make me worthy of what I have!"

Her voice kindled and her cheek flushed as she spoke. Lord Singleton could feel, as he heard the tones of her voice, what the glowing beauty of her upraised face must be ; and while he turned his sightless eyes downward, he murmured—"Oh, Sybil ! to think I shall never see you !"

THE END.

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